

*The Epistle to*  

---

*the*  
*Galatians*  

---



**Dr. Paul G. Caram**

RITUAL  
or  
RELATIONSHIP

A Study of Paul's Epistle to  
— *The Galatians* —

Paul G. Caram

“For in Christ Jesus neither  
circumcision availeth any thing,  
nor uncircumcision, but a new creature.”

*Galatians 6:15*

The only thing God wants  
is a new heart, a changed life.

*"Galatians"*

Copyright © by Paul G. Caram

April 2003

All rights reserved

Printed in the U.S.A.

For further information or  
additional copies contact:

**Zion Christian Publications**

**Box 256**

**Ulysses, PA. 16948**

**Phone (814) 848-9775**

**Fax (814) 848-7315**

**More Info: [www.zcbooks.com](http://www.zcbooks.com)**

Printed by:

Zion Christian Publications

Box 256

Ulysses, PA. 16948

USA

# Ritual or Relationship

## Introduction

From the beginning of time man has entreated God's favor. Man's attempt to please God, however, has often been on his own terms, using his own resources. Adam tried to cover his sin and the shame of his nakedness with fig leaves, but God would only accept what He Himself had provided for a covering—the skins of animals. Of course, *animal skins* imply that the shedding of innocent blood was required. Likewise, God could not accept Cain or his offering because of the wrong condition of his heart. Romans 10:2-3 describes man's endeavor to come to God his own way.

### Faith is the Basis of Every Blessing

What does God really want from man? How can we please Him and open His heart unto us? The first step is *faith* for “without faith it is impossible to please Him” (Heb.11:6). When Jesus was asked: “What shall we do that we might work the works of God?” His simple reply was, “Believe on him whom God has sent” (Jn. 6:28,29). Faith is *a relationship!* It is a condition of heart. Paul taught us that “faith works by love” (Gal. 5:6). Faith, therefore, can only operate in a soft heart. It “works” by love.

Forgiveness is based upon faith in the One who paid our debt upon the cross. Therefore, salvation is received by faith. The gift of the Holy Spirit is received by faith. Healing for our bodies is received by faith, and provision for our needs is by faith. As a matter of fact, everything we receive from God is by grace through faith. Even coming into Christian perfection is by a walk of faith through our union and communion with Jesus Christ. “We are complete in Him” as Paul tells us in Colossians 2:10. Does Christian perfection come by ritual (something we bring about by our works) or does it come by a relationship of faith? This is what Paul’s Epistle to the Galatians is all about. There is only one thing that God wants and that is “a new creature”, a changed heart (Gal. 6:15). Traditions and unnecessary do's and don't's have no power to change our heart. In fact, they *strengthen* a fallen nature.

### Not Sacrifices and Rituals, But a Listening, Obedient Heart

“For I spake not unto your fathers, nor commanded them in the day that I brought them out of the land of Egypt, concerning burnt offerings or sacrifices: But this thing commanded I them, saying, *Obey my voice*” (Jer. 7:22-23, 11:7). God instituted all of the animal sacrifices on Mount Sinai just several months after Israel made their exodus from Egypt (cf. Ex.19:1-6). These offerings were merely *figures* of the sacrifice Christ would make upon the cross many centuries later. God made it very clear at the time He brought Israel out of Egypt that His heart was not concerned with the offerings and sacrifices of animals. He was interested in another kind of sacrifice—the sacrifice of obedience (Ex.19:5). He wanted a people who listened in their hearts, and then obeyed out of a relationship of love. This is the true sacrifice, and this is the path that brings a believer unto perfection.

King David recognized this truth, for he declared, “Sacrifice and offering thou didst not desire; mine ears hast thou opened” (Psa. 40:6-7). David understood the heart of God. He realized that God had no pleasure in the ritual of animal sacrifices, but in men with listening ears and responding hearts. It is a relationship of obedience, faith, and love that God desires, not lifeless rituals.

This was the lesson Paul was trying to impress upon the gullible Galatian churches, who in recent months had “fallen from grace.” The Galatians were now listening wholeheartedly to legalists who had crept into their congregations and persuaded them to go back to all of the rituals and customs of the Old Testament, a regime that Peter aptly describes as “a yoke which neither we nor our fathers were able to bear” (Acts 15:10). Having begun their walk in the Spirit, they were now trying to be made perfect by the flesh (Gal. 3:3). They had turned from a Gospel of faith (which produces the beautiful fruits of the Spirit) unto a system of works.

### **Wrong Doctrine - An Evil Spirit**

Paul exclaimed, “Who hath bewitched you [or who has cast a spell over you] that you should not obey the truth?” (Gal. 3:1). So persuasive were the *Judaizers* from Jerusalem that they were able to turn the hearts of the Galatians against their spiritual father and bring them under the spell and delusion of another spirit. Such is the power and venom of a wrong doctrine! False doctrine is more than a wrong concept; it is energized by an evil spirit. What did this new doctrine of the Judaizers produce? Certainly it was not the fruit of the Spirit, but contention and pride and a devouring of one another. It was not long before the love of God and the joy of the Lord and the movings of the Spirit had diminished in their services and in their personal lives. They had replaced a life and walk in the Spirit for a system of do's and don't's. They had received another gospel—another Jesus—another spirit. (cf. 2 Cor.11:4).

Paul continued his protest by using several arguments. Abraham, the father of the Jewish nation, was justified by faith, not works. He was justified by faith before he was circumcised, and he was justified by faith long before the Law of Moses was given. Even during the age of the Law the prophet Habakkuk emphasized *relationship*, saying, “The just shall live by faith.”

### **The Law is Good But Only Reveals Our Problem**

The Law was given to define sin. “By the law is the knowledge of sin.” The Law was a “curse” in that it could only show man what was wrong, yet offered him no power to change his problem. A *No Smoking* sign is good, but it only aggravates the craving for nicotine in a smoker. It does not give him any power to stop his habit. This is the reason Paul calls it “the curse of the law.” The law is good, but it gave men no power to keep it. However, the New Covenant of faith *does* supply that power to change.

“The law made nothing perfect, but the bringing in of a better hope did, by the which we draw nigh unto God” (Heb.7:19). The law was good, but the law by itself was unable to make men perfect. The bringing in of “a better hope” refers to the New Covenant which enables us to draw nigh to God, to come into His presence and be transformed.

This is the covenant of *faith/relationship*, the covenant that baptizes us in the Holy Spirit, that opens the veil and beckons us to come into an intimate fellowship with God. Today we have an access to God that was not possible in the time of the Law. When Paul said he was “dead to the law” in Galatians 2:19, he meant that he had turned from the Law as a means of salvation. He could never look again to the Old Testament rituals as a ground for acceptance as he had in the past.

### **The Law Pointed to the Promised Redeemer Who Would Open the Inheritance**

The Law looked ahead to a promised Redeemer. This Redeemer would pay man's debt, give power over sin, and open a rich eternal inheritance. Therefore, the people under the Law were heirs of something better to come. Paul likened the Old Covenant Law to *a schoolmaster* that tutored a child who was heir to a rich estate. While he is a minor, the child/heir ranks no higher than a servant. He is under tutors and disciplinarians until he reaches the age of maturity, then he receives the inheritance. When Christ came with the New Covenant of faith, the young heir became of age (having learned his lessons well) and received the inheritance. He is no longer in grade school under the Law with all the tutors and disciplinarians, but now he has graduated. Therefore, Paul asks the Galatians, “After you have come of age and received the inheritance, why are you going back to grade school to be under tutors again, and forfeiting your estate? Why do you want to go back to the Law?” “How turn ye again to the weak and beggarly elements whereunto ye desire again to be in bondage? Ye observe days, and months, and times, and years” (Gal. 4:9-10).

### **A Comparison of the Old and New Covenants**

The Apostle Paul then uses an allegory to *compare* the Old and New covenants. He does so by using two women and the sons they bore. Abraham had two wives, Hagar and Sarah. Hagar represents the Old Covenant. She was a bondswoman and her son was born of bondage. Sarah, a free woman, represents the New Covenant. Her son was born of freedom.

Ishmael was born of the flesh. This means his birth was something engineered by man and something man could produce (Gen.16:1-4). He represents the works of the Law. But Isaac was born of the Spirit. His birth required a miracle for Sarah was beyond the years of bearing. Isaac was born as a result of a promise, and it required a miracle of grace and faith. Ishmael was born as a result of impatience and man's natural thinking. Ishmael was something man could produce, but Isaac was something that only God could bring forth. And herein is the critical difference between the Old and New Covenants. One is based upon works (what man can do) while the other is based upon promise which is inherited by faith. Paul said to the Galatians, “You were born of Sarah, not Hagar.”—Why regress to that inferior spiritual line?

### **The Cross is an Offense – There is no Glory for Me**

The cross is an “offense” to a legalist and anyone else whose motives are not pure. It is offensive because it deprives a person of glory. The cross takes away all boasting. A legalist boasts in what he can do and earn and accomplish in his own strength: fasting, religious activities, works, traditions, rituals, observance of holy days, dress, foods, disassociations, and much more.

- To glory in the flesh—is to boast in what I can do.
- To have confidence in the flesh—is to rely on what I can do.
- To make a fair show in the flesh—is a displaying and parading of what I can do.

What is the fruit of legalism? Legalism produces pride and criticism, for the legalist looks down upon others who have not worked as hard as he has. A legalist, in trying to be the greatest keeper of the law, becomes the greatest violator of the law because he is unable to keep the most important commandment of all—the law of love. The whole law is summed up in one statement: to “love our neighbor as ourself.” Love is the fulfilling of the law (Rom.13:8-10, Gal. 5:14).

A believer who inherits God's promises does so by *a walk of faith*. He is not able to glory in himself. He can only glory in the cross. “God forbid that I should glory, [except] in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ” (Gal. 6:14). This person gives all glory to God for the spiritual work of circumcision that God has performed in his heart. On the contrary, the legalist hates the life of faith. He wants something he can see and feel and do. He wants something tangible to glory in, something he may lay claim to, something he has worked for and earned. The Jews did this! They majored in physical circumcision (Gal. 6:12,13). But while they focused on the external, they failed to understand the spiritual implications of circumcision that involved a work of redemption accomplished in the heart by God's Sword (Rom. 2:28,29). They worshipped the symbol but ignored the meaning of the symbol. In contrast, Paul emphasized the internal unseen work of God in the heart (Gal. 6:15).

### **Christian Liberty is Never a License to be Lawless**

While we are on the subject of Christian liberty, I would like to add this essential thought. The theology in Paul's epistles is sometimes misunderstood and used for a license to sin. When Paul said he was “dead to the law” and that “we are not under the law” or “free from the law,” he is not teaching us to be lawless. He is simply saying that we cannot rely on the Old Testament as a means of salvation or perfection, and that the Old Testament ceremonies are outdated. Quite to the contrary, his theology exhorts us to have the law fulfilled in us in spirit (cf. Rom. 8:4, 13:8-10). He reminds the Galatians that every man will “reap what he sows.” After enumerating the seventeen works of the flesh in Galatians 5:19-21, he warns that “they that do such things shall not inherit the kingdom of God.” This is another way of saying, “Thou shalt not commit adultery, fornication, murder, drunkenness, witchcraft” and so on. Never does Paul suggest that we are *free* from the moral law of God to live as we please. To live as we please is not freedom, but bondage unto death.

### **The Fruit of the Spirit – There is No Higher Law – This is Perfection**

A walk of faith, fellowship with God, obedience, living in the Spirit, and walking in the Spirit will lead to the development of all the fruits of the Spirit. All these fruits reveal the nature of God, and when these are flourishing in our lives we will be very much like Christ. “Against such there is no law.” There is no other law higher than this. With all of these things in mind, let us now by the grace of God look together into this marvellous *Epistle of Paul to the Galatians*.

## Background

Paul was the founding father of the churches of Galatia. He had brought revival fire there on at least two occasions, and possibly a third time. In Acts 16:6, he came to “the region of Galatia.” This was on his second missionary journey, in 51 A. D. On his third missionary journey, in 54 A.D, he “went over all the country of Galatia ... strengthening all disciples” (Acts 18:23).



If Paul's epistle was intended to include the inhabitants of southern Galatia as well as the north, (Antioch of Pisidia, Iconium, Lystra and Derbe were believed to be in south Galatia), then Paul made his first appearance to Galatia on his first missionary journey (48–49 A.D.). Who ever this epistle was written to, whether to north or south Galatia, or both, the message certainly is of vital concern to everyone in every place, at any time in history.

The last time Paul had been in contact with the Galatian churches, whether it was during his last visit to Galatia in 54 A.D., or by correspondence, they were “running well” (Gal. 5:7). But now, someone had “hindered them that they should not obey the truth?” It is now December, 57 A.D.

Upon Paul's arrival at Corinth for a third visit, news reached him from Ephesus that his churches in Galatia had been infiltrated by false teachers (the Judaizers) who persuaded them to turn to Jewish rituals, ceremonies, sabbaths, and circumcision as a means of salvation and perfection. This startling information received by Paul, that a sudden and drastic change in attitude toward him and his Gospel was taking place in the Galatian churches, caused the writing of this epistle. With a great sense of urgency, Paul hastened to check this evil before it became irreparable.

The Judaizers had in fact destroyed the very essence of Christianity, and had reduced it from an inward and spiritual life to an outward ceremonial system. In effect, they taught that Christ was not all-sufficient for one's salvation. From this fatal mixing of ceremonial law with grace, Paul sought to save his converts. The contents of Galatians make evident Paul's purpose for writing. The apostle answers for all time the question which concerns the very foundation of Christianity—Is Christ sufficient for salvation and perfection, or must supplements be added to His atoning work?

A defense of Christian liberty is the clear theme of Galatians, a liberty that is made possible only by a relationship of faith, the end of which is good works. No other epistle written by Paul is marked by a greater unity of purpose.

Therefore, in December of 57 A.D. while abiding in Corinth, Paul wrote his Epistle to the Galatians. In March of 58, just several months later, he also wrote to the Romans. These two epistles bear a striking resemblance which would naturally exist between two epistles written nearly at the same time. The same reasonings were occupying his mind, thus he employed the same phrases and illustrations. It is good to study Romans and Galatians, side by side.

Compare:

- (Romans 8:15 with Galatians 4:6)
- (Romans 7:14-25 with Galatians 5:17)
- (Romans 1:17 with Galatians 3:11)
- (Romans 4 with Galatians 3)
- (Romans 13:8-10 with Galatians 5:13,14)

Galatians can be outlined in three simple divisions

## GENERAL OUTLINE

- Chapter 1–2 PERSONAL - Paul defends his divine commission and apostleship, which had been undermined by false teachers.
- Chapter 3–4 DOCTRINAL - The doctrine of liberty, and freedom from Mosaic law (rituals, ceremonies, offerings, and circumcision).
- Chapter 5–6 PRACTICAL - Application of our Christian liberty (What this means and how to use it)

# Chapter One

## Paul Defends His Apostolic Office

In this chapter, and also in chapter two, Paul defends his apostolic call. The Judaizing party, with great vigor, had succeeded not only in undermining Paul's message, but in spreading slander about his personal life as well. Hence, the rigorous defence of himself in these first two chapters.

Galatians as a whole is written with abruptness and severity to show the urgency of the occasion, and the greatness of the danger. It is also frequently characterized by a tone of sadness, for those whom Paul loved so dearly were forsaking the truth and believing the slander of his enemies. Therefore, in order to remove the seeds of alienation and distrust which had been designedly planted in the minds of his converts, Paul begins his epistle by fully disproving the falsehoods which had been propagated against himself by his opponents. Especially does Paul vindicate his apostolic office which he received directly from Christ, and exercised independently of the Twelve apostles.

The Judaizers insisted that Paul falsely represented himself as an apostle of Christ. They reasoned that Paul had not, like the Twelve, been a follower of Jesus when He was upon earth. Therefore, he had not received his commission from Jesus. Instead, he was only a teacher sent out by the authority of the Twelve, whose teaching was only to be received as far as it agreed with theirs and was approved by them. But now Paul's doctrine (they alleged) was in opposition to that of Peter and James, and the other "pillars" of the Church. By such representations, these false ministers had alienated to a great extent the Galatian Christians from their father in the faith. But in chapters one and two, Paul refutes all their slanderous reports very effectively.

### **The Greeting—God Made Me An Apostle, Not Man**

1:1 "*Paul, an apostle, (not of men, neither by man, but by Jesus Christ, and God the Father, who raised him from the dead;)*. Paul is getting straight to the point. Immediately, he reestablishes his credentials before the Galatians. "I did not make myself an apostle. I was not trained by man, nor was I commissioned and sent out by man, or by the Twelve apostles, but by the Lord Jesus Christ Himself who appeared to me on the Damascus Road, and by God the Father who raised Him from the dead." It was the resurrected Christ who intercepted Paul on the road to Damascus, and who trained and commissioned him, not the Twelve. Paul, in fact, had not even been introduced to the Twelve (with the exception of Peter) until seventeen years after his conversion.

### **The Brethren Stood Behind Paul**

1:2 "*And all the brethren which are with me, unto the churches of Galatia:*" Paul does not wish to stand alone in opposition to the Judaizing heresy that has crept into the churches of Galatia. "All the brethren which are with me" refers to the unity with which Paul's fellow-ministers supported him in his case against the adversaries. Paul joins all the brethren that were with him. He is writing in their name as well as in his own. The fact that he is addressing "the churches of Galatia" shows very clearly that a whole territory was involved here, not just a local church.

## **Paul's Blessing—Grace and Peace to You**

1:3 “*Grace [be] to you and peace from God the Father, and [from] our Lord Jesus Christ,*” Virtually all of Paul's historic letters began with the greeting —“Grace and peace.” Although grace means “undeserved favor,” it obviously implies much more, for in the context of many passages of Scripture, it also means “divine enablement”. It is *ability* which God imparts. Every ministry gift operates according to the measure of grace. Romans 1:5 says that grace is given for obedience. In 1 Corinthians 15:10, it is strength to carry a heavy load. In Hebrews 12:15, grace keeps bitterness out of our hearts. Grace is offered to us in time of need (Heb. 4:16). The Galatians needed all of these enablings of grace, as Paul desired for them in the blessing of his salutation. Certainly they were going to need grace to accept Paul's forthcoming message of rebuke and exhortation.

Paul also wishes them peace. Although the Hebrew word *shalom* must have been in the back of the apostle's Jewish mind, (*shalom* meaning prosperity and well-being), the Greek word *eirene* is used here. *Eirene*, translated *peace*, is also rendered *unity* elsewhere. Peace and unity are equivalent in the original language. A united heart, a heart with singleness of purpose, has peace. But a heart with divided loyalties, one that is serving two masters, has no peace. The double-minded Galatians, in trying to be married to the old covenant and new covenant simultaneously, had been thrown into a state of agitation and division. Therefore, in his introduction, Paul invokes God for a fresh supply of divine grace and peace for the wandering hearts of his readers.

## **All Blessings—From the Father Through the Son**

“*From God the Father, and our Lord Jesus Christ.*” Every blessing comes from the Father, but is brought down to us from heaven by His Son, the Lord Jesus Christ. All the grace that was resident in the Father was poured into His Son during His life on earth. It is now offered unto each and every one of us as we remain a branch in the Vine and continue to draw our life from Christ (2 Tim. 2:1). Abiding in Christ is the key to spiritual growth and having our heart changed, not abstaining from pork or some other outward observance (Heb.13:9).

## **God's Love and Sacrifice Rescue Us From the Fate of the World**

1:4-5 “*Who gave himself for our sins, that he might deliver us from this present evil world, according to the will of God and our Father: To whom [be] glory for ever and ever. Amen.*” Christ gave Himself unto death as an offering for our sins. In turning from a Gospel of grace unto rituals, the Galatians had practically forgotten the substitutionary death of Christ upon the cross. The blood of the cross purchased our souls from the clutches of Satan and the power of sin. Could abstaining from pork lead us on to perfection? What could be added to the wonderful redeeming work of the cross?

Christ gave Himself for us to rescue us from all the corrupting influences of the present evil age (Titus 2:14), and from the god of this world (2 Cor. 4:4). People who reject Christ's sacrifice and follow the course of this world and the prince of this world will be swept into everlasting destruction (Eph. 2:1-4, 5:3-8). We ourselves were once captives of the world-system. Having “escaped the corruption that is in the world through lust” (2 Pet.1:4), may we never return to it and be ensnared.

Although we have been translated out of Satan's kingdom of darkness into the kingdom of God's dear Son (Col.1:13), we must ever walk in the Spirit and live in the Spirit to avoid fulfilling the lusts of the flesh. By turning away from the Spirit-led life, the Galatians were not only hindering themselves from coming into Christian perfection, they were in danger of drifting back into their former life-styles. Demas, a fellow minister of Paul, was not delivered from this present evil world *because he loved it* and went back to it (cf. 2 Tim. 4:10). There are many like Demas today.

## Paul Begins His Denunciation of the Galatians

1:6-7 “*I marvel [am amazed] that ye are so soon removed from him that called you into the grace of Christ unto another gospel: Which is not another; but there be some that trouble you, and would pervert the gospel of Christ.*” Paul is utterly amazed at the fickleness of the Galatians. Instead of his usual giving of thanks for the churches he founded, he plunges immediately into a sharp denunciation of them for defecting from a Gospel of grace into a rigid legalistic stance.

Paul always kept in close contact with his converts. He either visited them or sent trusted brethren, or he communicated with them by letters. Having been in close communication with the Galatians, the Apostle is deeply disturbed and disappointed to learn that his beloved spiritual children are “quickly” turning from the truth unto “another gospel.”

### Another Gospel

This “other gospel” was a Gospel mixed with man's precepts, and Paul called it a “perversion of the gospel of Christ.” It was not a denial of Christianity, but a mixing of it with men's ideas. These same Judaizers troubled nearly all of Paul's churches. In fact, the last four chapters of *Second Corinthians* deal with this very problem. The gospel preached by the Judaizers was indeed “another gospel” “another Jesus” and “another spirit” according to the Apostle Paul (2 Cor.11:4). The propagators were “false apostles” and “false brethren” (2 Cor.11:13, 26).

Today, as always, there are messages preached in the Church that are profoundly *unrepresentative* of Christ. “Another Jesus” is portrayed, and it is “another spirit” energizing the message. “False brethren”, Satan's ministers, are the ones who proclaim it. Certainly, they are not going to *deny* Christ, but in one form or another, they *pervert* His message. It is so subtle—this is what makes it so serious! Instead of gathering the sheep, they are scattering them (Mt.12:30; Lk.11:23). Every time a man promotes *his own vision or message*, he ends up harming the flock instead of doing them good. The Judaizers, who propagated their own “cause” (though they claimed it was God's), were doing great disservice and damage to God's people. Let us ask God to cleanse us of corrupt and self-seeking motives. Ask God if it is really His cause, or our own.

### The Curse Upon Any Who Add to the Gospel Message

1: 8-9 “*But though we, or an angel from heaven, preach any other gospel unto you than that which we have preached unto you, let him be accursed. As we said before, so say I now again, If any [man] preach any other gospel unto you than that ye have received, let him be accursed.*” Here is an awesome curse pronounced against the Judaizers and anyone else who “adds to or takes away from the Word of God” (cf. Rev. 22:18-19, Prov. 30:6, Deut. 4:2). The Judaizers had placed a grievous yoke of bondage upon the disciples in Galatia and elsewhere. Whenever man adds his own ideas and commandments to the Gospel, it mars the image of Christ. It produces something that is quite the opposite of the fruit of the Spirit. Only the *truth* makes men free (John 8:31-32).

### Angelic Visitations That Contradict the Gospel Must Not Be Heeded

“*But though we, or an angel from heaven, preach any other gospel unto you than that which we have preached unto you, let him be accursed.*” Mormonism, founded in 1830, is the result of an angelic visitation. Joseph Smith claimed to have found “an addition to the Bible” engraved on golden tablets which he translated and published under the name of the Book of Mormon. His direction to do all of this came from a fallen angel named Moroni who had visited him.

## Challenge Angels / Revelations

The Scriptures teach us to challenge angels who make themselves visible. When Joshua was about to lead the nation into Canaan their inheritance, suddenly a heavenly messenger with a drawn sword in his hand appeared. Joshua did not assume that every supernatural visitation is sent from God. He understood that Satan has hordes of counterfeit angels, since one-third of them have fallen. Therefore, he challenged the messenger and said: “Art thou for us, or for our adversaries?” The messenger replied: “As captain of the host of the Lord am I now come.” See Joshua 5:13-15. In this case, the heavenly visitor was the Lord Himself, and Joshua fell down and worshipped. The ground itself became holy because the Lord stood there. Ground can only be holy because of the presence of the Lord. No angel, whether good or evil, can make the ground holy. God alone is truly holy, and God alone is worthy to be worshipped.

### Pride—The Main Reason for False Doctrine / New Religions

Joseph Smith, founder of Mormonism, did not challenge the angel who appeared to him. The result is another gospel, which is not a true gospel at all, since it makes Christ less than God. But another question arises here, Why would this fallen angel come to Joseph Smith in the first place? Why not some other person? I believe the answer lies in one main thing—motives.

When a man has a morbid interest in knowing the future, mysterious phenomena, or having a revelation that no other person has ever had before, it attracts evil spirits and visitations like the one Joseph Smith had. Satan comes to those who have self-seeking, self-glorifying desires, those who have refused repeatedly to have their motives cleansed by God.

Pride is the outstanding singular reason for false doctrine. Pride is at the source of all the false religions of the world. The founder wanted to be unique—the only one of his kind. He wanted to have something, know something, or create something that no one else ever thought of before. Incredibly, individuals like this think they are deeply humble and highly favored of God. Such is the power of deception (See Obadiah 1:3).

And such was the mentality of the Judaizers who believed that God was smiling upon them as they slandered and defamed Paul and hoped for his demise, while defending the outdated Mosaic traditions. They were not worshippers of God, but worshippers of tradition (cf. Mk. 7:7, 7:13), and *worshippers of themselves*. Their glory was not in the cross. (The cross brings no glory to the flesh but only to the Lord Jesus Christ.) Neither did they care about the well being or eternal state of the people they tried to teach and influence.

“But though we, or an angel from heaven, preach any other gospel unto you than that which we have preached unto you, let him be accursed.” Galatians 1:8

1: 8-9 “*But though we, or an angel from heaven, preach any other gospel unto you than that which we have preached unto you, let him be accursed. As we said before, so say I now again, If any [man] preach any other gospel unto you than that ye have received, let him be accursed.*”

The Judaizers were guilty of preaching another gospel. They “troubled” the Galatians with an Old Testament emphasis that required them to observe all of the Levitical ordinances of Moses. In his former lifestyle, Paul himself had been the strictest observer of the Law of Moses (Phil. 3:4-6). After conversion he occasionally attended Jewish feasts and performed their vows and rites, only to accommodate Hebrew brethren who were still enslaved to their traditions, not for any purposes relating to redemption. The Judaizers framed a case against Paul, charging that he became “all things to all men” in an attempt to please everyone—“To please the Jews he observes the law; to please the Galatians he proclaims freedom from the law.” Paul responds to this accusation in verse 10.

### **“I do not try to please men as I did in the past”**

1:10 “*For do I now persuade men, or God? or do I seek to please men? for if I yet pleased men, I should not be the servant of Christ.*” Am I trying to impress man, or God? If I were still pleasing men, I would not be a servant of Christ. Paul is making an admission here that in his former life as a devout Pharisee, he had sought to please men. Everything that was gain to him then, was now loss. Now he is only trying to win Christ's approval. Maintaining Christ's approval meant he had to be faithful to the call he received on the Damascus road. This is true of us too. If we want to *maintain* Christ's favor, we must *continue* to walk in obedience to His will; otherwise His favor will be lost.

From 1:11 to 2:21, Paul is going to defend his apostolic call, but before we go on, I would like to say something about the structure of our study.

This book is not another theological verse by verse exposition of Paul's Epistle to the Galatians. We are not interested in only knowing the history and background of this letter, nor are we interested in only having the correct interpretation of each verse. It is our earnest desire that each passage have a *present day application* to our lives. Paul said that if he was still trying to please men, he would not be a servant of Christ. Is the Holy Spirit saying anything to us about our motives from this verse? Who are we trying to impress? Are we seeking man's honor more than God's? If so, we cannot be His true servants! (cf. Jn.12:42,43; Mt.10:37,38). In this study, let us listen carefully to what the divine Spirit is saying to our own hearts from each passage.

### **Paul Defends His Apostolic Call 1:11 – 2:21**

1:11-12 “*But I certify you [or I make known to you], brethren, that the gospel which was preached of me is not after man. For I neither received it of man, neither was I taught [it], but by the revelation of Jesus Christ.*” Paul is reminding the Galatians of something they already knew so well. Now he has to start from the very beginning, since their minds had become so deluded by the Judaizers. The Gospel Paul preached to them did not come from man. It did not come from tradition, or by instruction, but by divine *revelation*. As much time as Paul had spent in Galatia, he must have recounted the story of his dramatic conversion on the Damascus road where he met Christ. Soon after his conversion, Paul went into the Arabian desert for three years where the resurrected Christ openly manifested Himself to him and taught him the Gospel. Thus, his authority came directly from Christ.

In 1:11 to 2:21, Paul defends his divine call and apostolic office. The enemies of Paul undermined him in four main areas, to which Paul gives his defense in chapters 1 and 2, and also throughout the whole epistle.

#### *The Four False Charges:*

- 1.) The Judaizers accused Paul of being a men pleaser, observing the law whilst among the Jews, yet persuading the Gentiles to renounce it.
- 2.) They argued that his motive was to keep his converts in a subordinate state, excluded from the privileges of a full covenant with God which was enjoyed only by the circumcised.
- 3.) They declared that he was a flatterer, becoming all things to all men that he might make a party for himself.
- 4.) Above all, they insisted that because Paul had not been a follower of Jesus when He was on earth, he had not received his commission by Jesus, and that, on the contrary, he was only a teacher sent out by the authority of the Twelve apostles. Thus, they proposed that his teaching was only to be received in so far as it agreed with that of the Twelve. However, his doctrine (they alleged) was now in opposition to that of Peter and James and the other “pillars” of the Church.

In 1:10, Paul concedes that in his past life he was a men pleaser, but now, as a servant of Christ, he no longer solicits the praise of men. In actuality, it is the Judaizers who are seeking man's attention by their focus on the exterior facets of life. They are the ones who find the cross offensive, for the cross deprives the flesh of any glory. Hypocrisy is an interesting thing. A hypocrite always accuses others of the very thing of which he himself is most guilty. (See Rom. 2:1, Mt. 7:1-5).

In 1:11-12, Paul reminds the Galatians of the *source* of his authority. He was not taught by man, no, not even by the Twelve apostles, but by a divine revelation of the Lord Jesus Christ himself. He now testifies in the succeeding verses that upon being converted, he did not consult any man, but immediately went into the Arabian desert for three years where Christ Himself taught him the Gospel. Indeed, Paul was never trained by the Twelve apostles, for he had not even been introduced to them until seventeen years after his conversion. Subsequently, Paul summarizes the former years before his conversion when he sought to please men.

#### **The Years When Paul Was a Men-Pleaser**

1:13-14 *“For ye have heard of my [life-style] in time past in the Jews’ religion, how that beyond measure I persecuted the church of God, and wasted it: And profited in the Jews’ religion above many my equals in mine own nation, being more exceedingly zealous of the traditions of my fathers.”*

*“Ye have heard.”* The Galatians knew about Paul's past. Paul's dramatic conversion was well known among the churches. *They had heard!* How quickly people forget. Jesus warns: “Walk while ye have the light, lest darkness come upon you: for he that walketh in darkness knoweth not whither he goeth” (Jn.12:35). When believers do not take the Word to heart, they are not preparing and fortifying themselves for coming tests and end up in terrible confusion when they arrive. Ephesians 6:13 exhorts believers to arm themselves with *all* of God's armor in order to *stand in the evil day*. What is that “evil day”? It is a day when an extraordinary test comes. Job had a special day of temptation. Israel in the wilderness faced that day. So did Ruth and Orpah. Ruth stood the test and went on with God, but Orpah did not. She “went back to her gods” to her former life-style (cf. Ru.1:8-15).

## Paul's Years of Glorifying in the Flesh

*“For ye have heard of my conversation [or way of life] in time past in the Jews’ religion, how that beyond measure I persecuted the church of God, and wasted it: And profited in the Jews’ religion above many my equals in mine own nation, being more exceedingly zealous of the traditions of my fathers.”* Paul had “beyond measure” persecuted the Church of God.

- Acts 8:3. . . . “made havoc of the church”
- Gal. 1:13. . . . “beyond measure persecuted the Church of God and wasted it”
- 1 Tim. 1:13. . . . “a blasphemer, a persecutor, and injurious”
- Acts 22:19. . . . “beat in every synagogue them that believed” (480 synagogues in Jerusalem alone)
- Acts 9:13. . . . did “much evil ... to thy saints at Jerusalem”
- Acts 22:4. . . . “persecuted this way unto the death, delivering into prison both men and women”
- Acts 26:9,10. . . . did “many things contrary to the name of Jesus of Nazareth”
- Acts 26:10. . . . “many of the saints [he] shut up in prison”
- Acts 26:10. . . . “when they were put to death, I gave my [vote] against them”
- Acts 26:11. . . . “punished them oft in every synagogue, and compelled them to blaspheme”
- Acts 26:11. . . . “being exceedingly mad against them, I persecuted them even unto foreign cities”

This is the man who said he was “blameless” concerning the law (Phil. 3:4-6), yet there was murder in his unconverted heart. In his own strength he had observed every sabbath and attended every feast day. There was not one tradition, not one “jot or tittle” of the law that he failed to observe except the most important one—the law of love. A Pharisee of Pharisees, though circumcised in flesh, Saul was very *uncircumcised* in his heart. Absolutely no one understood the mind of the Judaizers more than Paul. Formerly, he had stood head and shoulders above all his peers in the Jewish religion.

At age thirteen, Saul moved from his home in Tarsus to reside in Jerusalem to study to be a rabbi. As the years went by, he memorized the entire Old Testament and could quote it verbatim. In fact, he could quote both the Hebrew and Greek versions without missing a word. Paul was a bright and rising star among his fellow colleagues. But when Christianity emerged in Jerusalem and started to flourish, unconverted Saul of Tarsus became her most vicious foe. In every synagogue he brutally beat all who believed on the name of Jesus, and there were nearly 500 synagogues in Jerusalem alone. It did not matter if they were men or women, Saul imprisoned them without sympathy. He tortured some, “compelling them to blaspheme”, and some were even put to death. Church history tells us that as many as 10,000 were persecuted by Saul. He was viewed as the great champion of the Jewish religion. His comrades encouraged and perhaps even incited him to “keep up the good work.” And while he sincerely believed he was doing God a service in defending the traditions of Judaism, he was also seeking the approval of men. Thus, he was a men pleaser.

All of his glory and “reputation” came to an end when he encountered Christ at noon just outside the city limits of Damascus (Acts 9, 22, and 26 record Paul's conversion). From that time forward, all those things which formerly had been gain to him were now considered loss. Not only did he count them loss, he suffered the loss of them too (Phil. 3:7-9). No longer was he praised by his peers, instead he was despised by most of them. His days of glorifying in the flesh and having confidence in the flesh were over. His only glory now was the cross of the Lord Jesus Christ. The Galatians knew all about Paul's conversion. *“They had heard”* of his past way of life in the Jewish religion, and Paul is now refreshing their memory and trying to bring them out of their stupor.

## **Paul Called by Grace**

1:15-16 *“But when it pleased God, who separated me from my mother’s womb, and called [me] by his grace, To reveal his Son in me, that I might preach him among the heathen; immediately I conferred not with flesh and blood:”* Here we see one of the greatest demonstrations of grace in the history of mankind. Christ appeared to Saul of Tarsus, a man who was devouring His Church. Paul was stunned, not only at the appearance of Jesus, but at the awesome realization that all of his campaigns, energy and zeal were in defense of the wrong cause. Paul was in direct opposition to God, and himself. Horrified and bewildered, he ate nothing for three days (Acts 9:8-9).

In spite of his misdirection in life, God saw something deeper in the heart of unconverted Saul. He saw a desire for the truth. God knew that when Paul saw the Light, he would be faithful to it and ardently defend it. This is the reason God showed him mercy. His persecution of the Church was out of “ignorance and unbelief” (1 Tim.1:11-13). He thought he was doing the right thing. Paul believed he was defending the faith, according to Deuteronomy 13:1-5.

## **Called From Birth**

Paul must have sensed the hand of God upon his life from the time he was a child. He must have had a sense of destiny for his life. It was God who “separated him from his mother's womb” as he did Jeremiah (Jer.1:5). He was “separated” unto God from birth and destined to become the supreme interpreter of the new covenant (Rom.1:1). He was ordained to be the chief apostle to the Gentile world. Yet he did not have knowledge of this call until he was in his early thirties. It is a comfort to know that God has His good hand upon us and is orchestrating events in our lives long before we know Him. Our call, however, goes back much further than this. Although Galatians 1:15 says he was “separated” unto this call from the time of birth, Ephesians 1:4 shows that our call goes back “before the foundation of the world.”

## **Called – To Reveal His Son in Me**

*“But when it pleased God, who separated me from my mother’s womb, and called [me] by his grace, To reveal his Son in me, that I might preach him among the heathen [or Gentiles];”* God's purpose is to reproduce the image of His Son in our lives. Our greatest goal as a Christian is to be conformed to the image of the Son of God (Rom. 8:29). The Father wants many who are replicas of His Son. We are not only called to preach, we are first called to have the character of Christ developed in our lives. It was the Father's intent to first “reveal his Son in Paul” and then use him to preach among the Gentiles. Although Paul was called in Acts 9, he was not actually commissioned to preach among the nations until Acts 13:2, a period of fourteen more years. Before God launched Paul into full time ministry, he needed a lot of preparation in his personal life. First, Paul had three years of “Bible school” in the Arabian desert. Here, he had his Jewish routine upset, for he failed to appear at any of the feasts. His “perfect attendance” record was ruined. It is good to have our routines interrupted.

1:16b - *“Immediately I conferred not with flesh and blood:”* As soon as Paul met Christ on the Damascus road, he did not consult with any human agency. He entered Damascus for a brief time and was healed there of blindness, baptized in water, and baptized in the Holy Spirit. Soon afterwards Paul departed from the city and went into Arabia for three years' seclusion. Here he was taught personally by the resurrected Christ Himself. Although Peter and the Twelve were trained for three years by the earthly Jesus of Nazareth, Paul was taught by the glorified Christ for three years. Paul is making it very clear that he is not in any way inferior to the Twelve. He was not taught or commissioned by them, or under their authority whatsoever. In every respect, he was their equal.

## Paul's Three Years in Arabia

1:16b-20 *“Immediately I conferred not with flesh and blood: Neither went I up to Jerusalem to them which were apostles before me; but I went into Arabia, and returned again unto Damascus. Then after three years I went up to Jerusalem to see Peter, and abode with him fifteen days. But other of the apostles saw I none, save James the Lord’s brother. Now the things which I write unto you, behold, before God, I lie not.”*

Paul's stay in Damascus was brief. Impelled by the Holy Spirit, he left Damascus to go into Arabia, a region south and east of Palestine. On his journey from Damascus, Paul purposely bypassed Jerusalem and continued south into Arabia where he would have uninterrupted communion for three years with the Christ who had appeared to him at Damascus. Here the Lord Himself would teach Paul the mysteries of the Gospel which had been hidden for ages and generations.

The Apostle Paul was making a clear statement to the Galatians. He had not consulted man for instruction. He did not go “up to Jerusalem.” Jerusalem was the home base of the Twelve apostles. Jerusalem itself was “up”. Its elevation was 2500 feet above sea level. It was higher than most other places in Palestine. Paul did not go *up* to Jerusalem to them who were apostles before him. He was not trained by Peter or any of the other apostles of the Lord. Instead he headed for Arabia. After three years in Arabia he returned again to Damascus, but because of a conspiracy to kill him, he was let down over the wall at night (2 Cor.11:32-33; Ac. 9:25). Having escaped from Damascus, he then came for the *first time* to Jerusalem since his conversion.

Please note that between Acts 9:22 and 9:23 is a gap of three years. The Acts narrative does not cover Paul's three year absence from Damascus while he was in Arabia.

### CILICIA

- Tarsus

- Paul was converted at Damascus, Syria.
- From Damascus, he went to Arabia for three years.
- Then he returned briefly to Damascus.
- Because of a conspiracy to kill him, Paul escaped from Damascus and made his first visit to Jerusalem since conversion.
- After he had stayed only 15 days in Jerusalem, the brethren sent Paul home to Tarsus (in Cilicia) because of a plot on his life.

### SYRIA

- Damascus

### ISRAEL

- Jerusalem

### ARABIA

Paul's purpose for coming to Jerusalem was not to gather instruction from the Twelve apostles, or to seek their approval. The one major thing Paul's first visit did accomplish was the removal of fear and suspicion from the minds of the Christians at Jerusalem. When Paul first tried to associate himself with the believers there, they were afraid of him. Then Barnabas stood up and introduced a “converted” Paul to the Church (Acts 9:26-28). Acts 9:27 says that Barnabas brought him to the apostles. These “apostles” are not to be confused with the Twelve apostles of the Lord. There were *many* apostles in Jerusalem. Barnabas himself was an apostle, but he was not of the caliber of the Twelve. While abiding in Jerusalem these fifteen days, Paul was introduced *only* to Peter and also James, the Lord's brother. The other eleven apostles were probably absent from the city at that time. It was common for them to be out of town evangelizing other cities.

## **Paul Asks God to be His Witness**

1:20 *“Now the things which I write unto you, behold, before God, I lie not.”* Paul wanted the Galatians to know that his contact with the Twelve apostles was virtually nonexistent, and that his time spent with Peter was only a few days. Everything Paul is saying here is an effort to underscore his independence of the Jerusalem Church. The Apostle thought it serious enough to take a solemn oath “before God” that the Gospel he preached came entirely by supernatural means. He was not taught by man at all.

## **Paul Flees Jerusalem, Goes Home to Tarsus and Out of Sight**

1:21 *“Afterwards I came into the regions of Syria and Cilicia;”* The narrative of Acts 9:29-31 will help us here. During those fifteen days in Jerusalem, Paul spoke boldly in the name of the Lord Jesus but in doing so he stirred up heated debates with contentious Jews. When the Christian brethren learned of an assassination plot against Paul, they quickly sent him to the seaport city of Caesarea and on home to Tarsus, Cilicia. *“Syria and Cilicia”* bordered each other and Paul may have travelled by land through Syria to reach his home in Tarsus, Cilicia. What Paul did during those obscure years in Tarsus can only be left to conjecture. Paul does not come back into the narrative of Acts until 11:24-26, six or seven years later, when Barnabas brought him from Tarsus to Antioch, Syria to teach. (43 or 44 A.D.)

The next time Paul entered the gates of Jerusalem was 44 A. D. At that time Paul and Barnabas brought donations to the poor because of a severe famine. This was Paul's second visit since conversion. (cf. Acts 11:29-30, 12:25).

## **Paul Stays Out of Touch With Judea / Jerusalem**

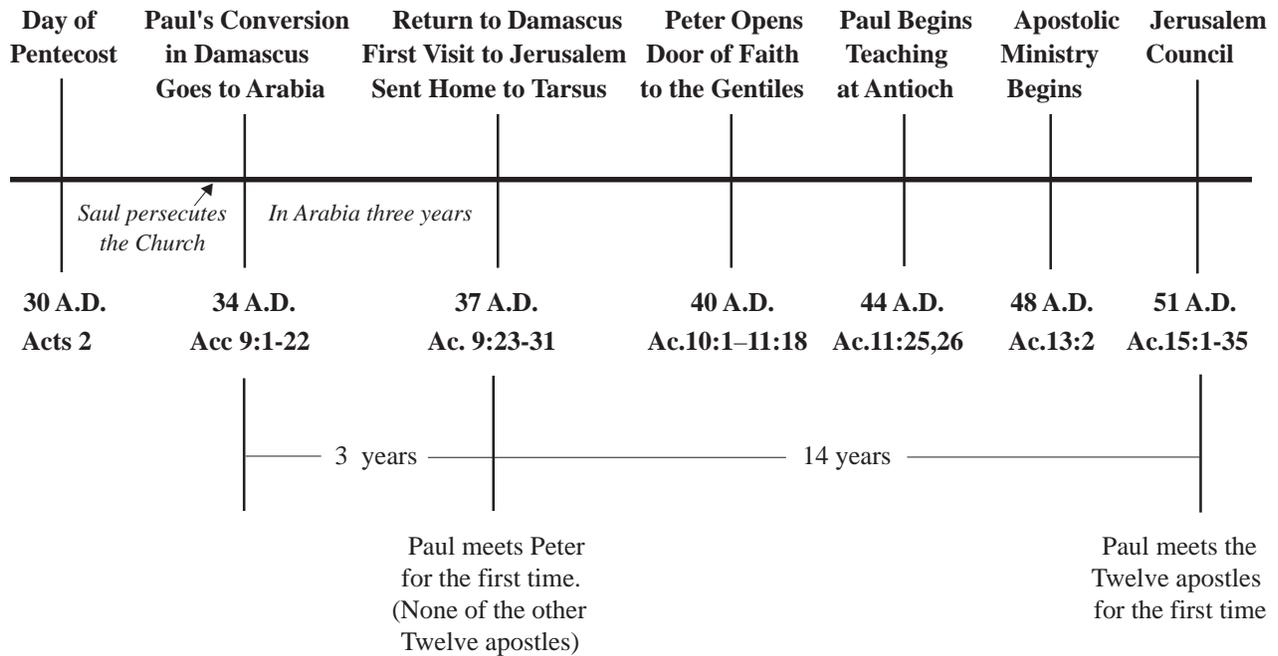
### **“Unknown by face to the churches of Judaea”**

1:22-24 *“And was unknown by face unto the churches of Judaea which were in Christ: But they had heard only, That he which persecuted us in times past now preacheth the faith which once he destroyed. And they glorified God in me.”*

Except for those “fifteen days” in Jerusalem, it is quite apparent that Paul had no direct contact or personal relations with Jerusalem or Judaea for at least ten years after his conversion. A great distance separated Paul from Judaea. Obviously, he was independent of the mother church. He was “unknown by face unto the churches of Judea.” Thus, Paul continues to make his defense to the Galatians. He was not indebted to the churches or brethren of Judea, (including the Twelve apostles) for the Gospel he preached. He was totally out of contact with them.

In Galatians 2:1, Paul makes reference to the Jerusalem Council, an assembly meeting during which he and the Twelve apostles were officially introduced. Here they extended to him “the right hand of fellowship” (cf. Gal. 2:9). This event took place fourteen years after his first encounter with Peter, a total of seventeen years since his conversion. We will clarify this with our chart on the next page.

## Chronology for Galatians 1–2



- From Jerusalem, Paul was enroute to Damascus.
- At Damascus, Paul met Christ. His stay there was brief.
- From Damascus, Paul went south to Arabia and stayed three years.
- From Arabia, Paul returned to Damascus, but had to escape over a wall at night.
- From Damascus, Paul came to Jerusalem, his first visit since conversion, staying 15 days.
- From Jerusalem, Paul went to Caesarea, through Syria, and back home to Tarsus, Cilicia.
- After seven more years of obscurity, Barnabas brought Paul from Tarsus to Antioch, Syria to teach.
- Seventeen years after conversion, Paul met all the Twelve at the Jerusalem Council.



## Summary of Chapter One

Paul defended his apostolic office and his message. He was not a student who learned at the feet of the Twelve apostles, nor was he sent out by them or under their covering. He was an apostle independent of the Twelve and was personally taught and commissioned by Christ Himself. Paul was an equal to the Twelve.

1:1 Paul was “an apostle, not of man, neither by man, but by Jesus Christ” (not the twelve apostles)

1:2 “All the brethren who are with me” were in agreement with Paul and his forthcoming message.

1:3 “Grace and peace” are what the Galatians needed. These could not be merited by works.

1:4-5 Christ “gave himself for us,” an emphasis on Christ's substitutionary sacrifice, not works.

1:6 The Galatians were rebuked for quickly turning from “the gospel of grace unto another gospel.”

1:7 They were being influenced and “troubled by some who were *perverting* the Gospel.”

1:8-9 Paul warns that any man or angel who adds to or takes away from the Gospel will be “cursed”.

1:10 Paul at one time “pleased men” as a Pharisee, but now as a servant of Christ, he does not.

1:11 The Gospel I preach is “not from man.” There is no human element or men's ideas in it.

1:12 Paul was not “taught” by man. His teaching came only by “the revelation of Jesus Christ.”

1:13 The Galatians “heard” how formerly he persecuted the Church and wasted it. They knew!

1:14 They knew he had been head and shoulders above his peers in Judaism and was honored.

1:15 But then Paul (who was called from birth) was visibly “called by grace” on the Damascus road.

1:16 *First* he was called to have “the Son revealed in him,” *then* to preach Him among the Gentiles.

1:16b As soon as Paul had knowledge of God's call, he did not consult man or rely on others.

1:17 He did not go to Jerusalem to the Twelve apostles, but to Arabia to be with Christ for three years.

1:18 After three years, he went to see Peter for only 15 days, not long enough to be tutored by him.

1:19 Paul did not meet the other 11 apostles, but only James, the Lord's brother.

1:20 He invokes God to be his witness regarding the things he has just told the Galatians.

1:21 After being with Peter 15 days, he retreated home to Tarsus, passing through Syria and Cilicia.

1:22 Paul remained “unknown by face to the churches in Judea,” having no contact with the Twelve.

1:23 The Judaeans (including Jerusalem) did not see Paul. They “heard only” of his conversion.

1:24 The saints “glorified God” for the marvellous work He had performed in Paul's life.

# Chapter Two

## Paul's Continued Defense of His Apostolic Authority

In 2:1-10, Paul makes reference to the Jerusalem Council, a leaders' conference where he first came in contact with the Twelve apostles. The date of the Jerusalem Council was A.D. 51, six years before the Galatian problem. It is obvious that the Twelve could not have known Paul before this meeting for several important reasons. Upon being introduced to Paul, they officially “extended the right hand of fellowship” to him. Certainly then, Paul was not opposed by the Twelve (as the Judaizers were saying) but *endorsed* by them. Also, seeing Paul for the first time, they “perceived the grace that was given him.” The Spirit that worked effectually in Peter to minister to the Jewish world was also working mightily through Paul to minister to the Gentile world.

At the council meeting, the Twelve apostles made their first physical acquaintance with Paul. Beforehand, everything they knew about him was hearsay. In his presence, they quickly recognized his apostolic office—an office that made Paul an equal to Peter, the leader of the Twelve. At the conclusion of the Council, Paul and the Twelve were in perfect harmony. All of them agreed that the Gentiles were not obligated to keep the ceremonial law of Moses or be circumcised. Therefore, in actual fact, it was the Judaizers who were in conflict with the Twelve, not Paul.

### Paul Recounts the Jerusalem Council

*2:1-5 “Then fourteen years after I went up again to Jerusalem with Barnabas, and took Titus with [me] also. 2 And I went up by revelation, and communicated unto them that gospel which I preach among the Gentiles, but privately to them which were of reputation, lest by any means I should run, or had run, in vain.” 3 But neither Titus, who was with me, being a Greek, was compelled to be circumcised: 4 And that because of false brethren unawares brought in, who came in privily to spy out our liberty which we have in Christ Jesus, that they might bring us into bondage: 5 To whom we gave place by subjection, no, not for an hour; that the truth of the gospel might continue with you.”*

It has been “fourteen years” since Paul has last seen Peter in Jerusalem (cf. Gal.1:18, Ac. 9:26-31). Altogether, seventeen years have lapsed since the conversion of Paul. Now for the first time, he comes face to face with the Twelve apostles of the Lord. To discuss a doctrinal difference was the occasion that brought them all together. The Jerusalem Council is recorded for us in Acts 15:1-29. Verses 1-6 summarize the purpose of this council meeting of all the Church leaders, and aptly describes the characteristics of the Judaizers who were troubling all the Gentile churches.

“And certain men which came down from Judaea taught the brethren, and said, Except ye be circumcised after the manner of Moses, ye cannot be saved. When therefore Paul and Barnabas had no small dissension and disputation with them, they determined that Paul and Barnabas, and certain other of them, should go up to Jerusalem unto the apostles and elders about this question. And being brought on their way by the church [of Antioch], they passed through [Phoenicia] and Samaria, declaring the conversion of the Gentiles: and they caused great joy unto all the brethren. And when they were come to Jerusalem, they were received of the church, and of the apostles and elders, and they declared all things that God had done with them. But there rose up certain [ones] of the sect of the Pharisees which believed, saying, That it was needful to circumcise them, and to command them to keep the law of Moses. And the apostles and elders came together for to consider this matter” (Acts 15:1-6)

It would be good to ponder Acts 15:1-6 for a moment, for these verses perfectly encapsule the agenda of the Judaizers who were infiltrating the Gentile churches, and later Galatia. These self-proclaimed evangelists from Jerusalem wanted to customize the Gentiles with Jewish traditions. They insisted that the Gentiles could not be saved unless they were circumcised and kept the law of Moses. When the Judaizers visited Antioch (Paul's home church) and “taught the brethren,” Paul and Barnabas had “no small dissension and disputation with them.” Finally it was determined by the Antioch leaders that Paul, Barnabas, and certain other ones should go up to Jerusalem unto the apostles and elders to hammer out this problem (Ac.15:1-2).

After the Jerusalem Council ended, the Twelve apostles, the elders, and James were able to make a public statement. They decreed that the Gentiles were not obligated to keep the ceremonial law of Moses or to be circumcised. Also, they wrote a letter stating that the men who were propagating these unnecessary commandments were not sent out or sanctioned by them. In fact, the Council denounced their actions (cf. Ac.15:24). Still the Judaizers continued to plague Paul's churches for years to come. Let us return to the narrative, as Paul resumes the story of his life. Every detail of his personal history is intended to establish his claims as an apostle of Christ.

2:1 *“Then fourteen years after I went up again to Jerusalem with Barnabas, and took Titus with [me] also.”* Thus, Paul had now come to Jerusalem, accompanied by Barnabas, Titus, and other delegates from Antioch. They represented the Gentile Church and their stand for freedom from the Levitical ordinances of Moses.

### **By Revelation, Paul Comes to Jerusalem**

2:2 *“And I went up by revelation, and [laid before them] that gospel which I preach among the Gentiles, but privately to them which were of reputation, lest by any means I should run, or had run, in vain.”* “I went up by revelation.” In other words, at the Lord's direction Paul went to Jerusalem. God wanted Paul to go to this council meeting, and all the brethren in Antioch had the same witness of the Spirit (Ac.15:2). With a revelation, Paul understood the importance of attending this meeting, and he had an assurance that God was with him.

### **Paul Addresses the Leaders Privately**

Upon first arriving in Jerusalem, Paul shared in the church “all things that God had done with them” (Ac.15:4). He and Barnabas probably addressed the mother church in a general way. But before the public discussions began in the Council meeting, he met “privately” with the prominent leaders and apostles. Here he spoke in greater detail of the Gospel he had been preaching among the Gentiles. Paul had to convince the chief leaders of the Jerusalem Church the validity of his position—that Gentiles were not under Moses' Law. If he could persuade the chief leaders, the outcome of the Council would be in his favor. If he failed to do so, he would “run in vain”. His past labors, as well as his present and future work, would be greatly jeopardized. Paul needed a consensus from the elders, leaders, and Twelve apostles. By gaining a united front in the mother church in Jerusalem, the leaders could settle the controversies over whether or not the Gentiles should keep Moses' Law.

As it turned out, the Council did come into one accord on this matter, although, as expected, there were “false brethren” in that conference who tried to bring division. A conciliatory letter was sent out to all the Gentile churches releasing them from the bondage of all the Levitical ordinances (Ac.15:19-31). The proclamation of freedom brought great joy and encouragement (v30-31).

## **False Brethren Were Smuggled into the Council**

2:3-5 *“But neither Titus, who was with me, being a Greek, was compelled to be circumcised: And that because of false brethren unawares brought in, who came in privily to spy out our liberty which we have in Christ Jesus, that they might bring us into bondage: To whom we gave place by subjection, no, not for an hour; that the truth of the gospel might continue with you.”*

Paul was very wise in first having private conferences with the chief leaders in Jerusalem. As the public Council began, “false brethren” who had wormed their way into the meeting began stirring up a lot of trouble. Acts 15:7 says there was “much disputing”. The false brethren insisted that Titus, a Gentile who had come with Paul, had to be circumcised. However, the Council did not uphold the demands of the dissenters and Titus was not circumcised. Paul wanted the Galatians to know the position of the Jerusalem Council and the Twelve apostles.

Paul and Barnabas would not allow Titus and the other Gentiles to be brought “into bondage”. Peter himself supported Paul, saying that all of the Mosaic ordinances were “a yoke which neither our fathers nor we were able to bear” (cf. Ac.15:10). To these enemies of the Gospel and of Christian freedom, Paul absolutely refused to yield—“that the truth of the gospel might continue with them.” It was not only on behalf of Titus that Paul would not give in, but for the sake of all Christians, especially the Galatians to whom he was now writing.

### **The Twelve Made No Correction or Addition to Paul's Gospel**

2:6 *“But of these who [were reputed] to be somewhat, (whatsoever they were, it maketh no matter to me: God accepteth no man's person:) for they who seemed to be somewhat in conference [imparted] nothing to me:”* In no way did Paul feel inferior or subordinate to the Twelve apostles. Even the most reputable leaders in the Council, namely the Twelve apostles, added nothing to Paul's message, and found no fault in it. The false teachers who had recently infected Galatia had no grounds whatsoever to question Paul's teachings or suggest that there was a rift between Paul and the Twelve. On the contrary, the Twelve had placed their seal of approval upon Paul (v7-9).

### **The Twelve Recognize Paul as an Equal / Are Joined Together**

2:7-9 *“But contrariwise, when they saw that the gospel of the uncircumcision was committed unto me, as the gospel of the circumcision was unto Peter; (For he that wrought effectually in Peter to the apostleship of the circumcision, the same was mighty in me toward the Gentiles:) And when James, Cephas, and John, who seemed to be pillars, perceived the grace that was given unto me, they gave to me and Barnabas the right hands of fellowship; that we should go unto the heathen, and they unto the circumcision.”* Contrary to the claims of Paul's adversaries, the Twelve fully recognized and endorsed Paul's apostolic office and authority. The same Spirit that worked mightily in Peter's apostolic ministry to the Jewish world, worked in equal measure in Paul's apostolic ministry to the Gentile world. Therefore, they extended the right hand of fellowship to Paul.

2:10 *“Only they would that we should remember the poor; the same which I also was forward to do.”* Although Paul's ministry was primarily to the Gentile world, the Twelve besought Paul to help the poor saints in the mother land of Israel who were ostracized socially and economically by the non-believing Jews for their faith in Christ. This request Paul was very eager to fulfill (1 Cor.16:1-3, 2 Cor. 9:1; Rom.15:26,27, Ac. 24:17). Paul was zealous to gather aid from the wealthier Gentile churches. These offerings from Gentile churches would help show the Jewish Christians in Palestine the sincerity of the Gentile converts and further establish a bond of unity between the two.

## Summary of the Jerusalem Council

(Galatians 2:1-10, Acts 15:1-29)

Let's review the important points of the Jerusalem Council of A.D. 51:

- It was the first face-to-face meeting of Paul and the Twelve apostles.
- Seventeen years had lapsed since Paul's conversion before he was introduced to the Twelve.
- Paul had not been taught or influenced by them whatsoever.
- His only contact was with Peter, and that was fourteen years earlier.  
That was only for fifteen days, a time not long enough to be tutored by him.  
He also was unknown by face in Judaea, and out of touch with Jerusalem's mother church.
- Doctrinal differences introduced by the Judaizers occasioned the Jerusalem Council (Ac.15:1-2).
- Paul was directed by the Spirit, "by revelation" to go to the Council meeting.
- Paul first had *private* preliminary meetings with the main leaders of the Jerusalem Church.  
He laid before them the Gospel he preached, and convinced them of his divine teachings.
- When the Council began, *false brethren* who had slithered into the meeting, caused much contention.
- The false brethren insisted that Titus and the Gentiles had to be circumcised and keep the law.
- The Council (which included the Twelve apostles) agreed that Titus did *not* need to be circumcised.
- Paul would not yield for a moment to the bondage the false brethren were imposing on Gentiles.
- He wanted the truth of the gospel (justification, perfection by a walk of faith) to continue with them.
- The Council's verdict was that the Mosaic laws and circumcision were not necessary for Gentiles.
- The Council stated that the Judaizers were not sent out from them and reprimanded them (Ac.15:24).
- The Twelve apostles fully endorsed Paul, and extended the right hand of fellowship to him.
- The Twelve considered Paul's apostolic office equal to Peter's, who was the leader of the Twelve.
- The Twelve made no correction or addition to Paul's teachings. They "added nothing to him".
- Therefore, Paul was not in conflict with the Twelve, the Judaizers were.  
These were Paul's reasonings with the Galatians.

### Peter Wavers Shortly After the Jerusalem Council

2:11-14 *"But when Peter was come to Antioch, I withstood him to the face, because he was to be blamed. For before that certain [ones] came from James, he did eat with the Gentiles: but when they were come, he withdrew and separated himself, fearing them which were of the circumcision. And the other Jews dissembled likewise with him; insomuch that Barnabas also was carried away with their dissimulation. But when I saw that they walked not uprightly according to the truth of the gospel, I said unto Peter before them all, If thou, being a Jew, livest after the manner of Gentiles, and not as do the Jews, why compellest thou the Gentiles to live as do the Jews?"*

When the Jerusalem Council had concluded, with its verdict settled, Paul, Barnabas and their companions returned to Antioch (Ac.15:30-35). Soon after, Peter came down from Jerusalem and paid a visit to Antioch (Gal. 2:11-14). While he was in Antioch, Peter was enjoying fellowship with the Gentile brethren, and was eating with them. Suddenly he learned that other Jewish brethren from Jerusalem were approaching, and he withdrew himself from the Gentiles, "fearing them which were of the circumcision [or Jews]." Peter's problem was fear. He was afraid that certain ones from the Jerusalem church would take issue with him for eating with the Gentiles. His behavior adversely affected the brethren with him. Barnabas, too, was "carried away with their dissimulation [or hypocrisy]." Paul rebuked Peter in front of them all for living two lives. By Peter's actions, he was making a denial of all he had just said at the Jerusalem Council when he declared: "God has put no difference between us and them, purifying all of our hearts by faith" (cf. Ac.15:9-11).

## **A Blemish on Peter**

This was a blemish on the character of Peter. His action of withdrawing himself from the Gentiles for fear of what other biased Jewish brethren would think was *inexcusable*. Peter knew better. He was the one God had chosen to first open the door of faith to the Gentiles, as he testified in Acts 15:7-11. Peter had preached to the household of Cornelius (Ac.10:25-48), and saw those Gentiles baptized in the Holy Spirit, even though they were not circumcised or observing any of the law of Moses. God had accepted them just as they were, without practicing any of the Jewish customs.

Peter was still ruled by fear, even 21 years after his denial of Christ. The fear of man causes many people to sin and compromise (Prov. 29:25). Peter's influence upon his peers was formidable, as is true of any prominent leader. When the Jewish brethren saw Peter withdrawing from the dinner table, they did too. Barnabas was "carried away with their dissimulation" as well. Barnabas had instability too. Soon after, Barnabas left Paul (Ac.15:36-41). At the time of these events, Barnabas was still with Paul, proving that Peter's visit to Antioch was shortly after the Jerusalem Council.

## **Paul's Rebuke of Peter**

In 2:11-21, Paul took another step in his argument to prove his apostleship. In 1:11-24, he reviewed his conversion and early ministry and showed that these were completely independent of the influence of the other apostles. Next, he showed that at the Council at Jerusalem, he was recognized as an equal by the apostles and was given the right hand of fellowship. Now he recalls the occasion on which he found it necessary to rebuke Peter, the reputed leader of the Twelve. Certainly, then, his authority must be at least as great as that of Peter's.

Paul sat at the dinner table with Peter and viewed the whole episode firsthand. Immediately Paul was alarmed, realizing the implications of Peter's withdrawal from the table. A stigma of uncleanness was being cast upon the Gentile converts. Peter's action reinforced a mentality that the Jewish believers were more spiritual than the Gentile believers, that observing the Mosaic laws promoted a greater sanctity than faith in Christ could. In defense of Christian liberty, Paul admonished Peter in front of them all because he "walked not uprightly according to the truth of the gospel."

*"I said unto Peter before them all, If thou, being a Jew, livest after the manner of Gentiles, and not as do the Jews, why compellest thou the Gentiles to live as do the Jews?"* (2:14b). Paul charges Peter with inconsistency. Peter is wrong and he knows it. Years before in Joppa, God told Peter on the housetop that he should not regard as "unclean" that which God had cleansed (Acts 10:15, 28). Recognizing, then, that God fully accepted the uncircumcised Gentiles, Peter laid aside his Jewish upbringing and prejudice and lived freely as a Gentile. But now he had betrayed those convictions to accommodate legalistic Jews from Jerusalem who still considered Gentiles unfit to eat with (cf. Acts 11:2-3, 10:28). Thus, in disassociating himself from his Gentile friends, he was inferring that they were unclean and less spiritual. His actions suggested that Jewish observances conferred a *superior* sanctity and spiritual standing, thereby "compelling the Gentiles to live as Jews."

## **Jews and Gentiles - All Justified by Faith Without the Works of the Law**

In verses 15-21, Paul emphasizes that Jews and Gentiles are both justified by faith without the works of the Law. Christ had "broken down the middle wall of partition" that separated Jews and Gentiles. He made "one new man" of the two. Through Christ both Jews and Gentiles have access to the Father by the same Spirit (Eph. 2:14-18). There is not a Jewish Church and a Gentile Church.

## **Jews Have No Advantage Over Gentiles—All Need Forgiveness**

2:15-17 *“We who are Jews by nature, and not sinners of the Gentiles, [yet] Knowing that a man is not justified by the works of the law, but by the faith of Jesus Christ, even we have believed in Jesus Christ, that we might be justified by the faith of Christ, and not by the works of the law: for by the works of the law shall no flesh be justified. But if, while we seek to be justified by Christ, we ourselves also are found sinners, is therefore Christ the minister of sin? God forbid.*”

Paul now compares the Jews with Gentiles. The Jews had the Law of Moses and were restrained presumably from the grosser vices of the world. They were not “sinners of the Gentiles.” The Jews had the Law and other privileges and attainments, and looked down on others. Yet, they too were sinners! They too had broken the Law and needed forgiveness and pardon, just as much as the Gentiles. The sin of the Jews was just as repugnant to God as the sin of the Gentiles. The Jews had a sinful nature, just like everyone else, and attempting to keep the Law did not change their heart. Therefore, “by the works of the Law no flesh shall be justified” (cf. Psa.143:2, Rom. 3:20). Everyone needs a Redeemer. Paul is putting Jews and Gentiles all in the same category as he also does in Romans.

*“But what if, while seeking to be justified in Christ, [we have indeed reduced ourselves also to the sinful state of unhallowed Gentiles?] Is Christ then a minister of sin? God forbid!” (2:17).* The Gospel of Christ regards a Jew to be a sinner as much as a Gentile. Does this make Christ a minister of sin? Is He making the sin problem worse? If the Gospel makes no distinction between Gentile sinners and Jews who observe the Law, is Christ promoting sin or making it worse? Absolutely not! Jews who know the Law and Gentiles who are ignorant of the Law have one thing in common—all are transgressors who need forgiveness, and this is only found by having faith in the One who died for all, the Lord Jesus Christ.

### **Reviving What I Renounced is Sin**

2:18-21 *“For if I build again the things which I destroyed, I make myself a transgressor. For I through the law am dead to the law, that I might live unto God. I am crucified with Christ: nevertheless I live; yet not I, but Christ liveth in me: and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me, and gave himself for me. I do not frustrate the grace of God: for if righteousness come by the law, then Christ is dead in vain.”*

2:18 Paul is making reference to Peter's behavior here. “For if I build again the things which I destroyed, I make myself a transgressor.” Peter had renounced the Law as a means of justification, but in Antioch he was *rebuilding* what he had torn down. He proclaimed at the Jerusalem Council: “God has put no difference between the Jew and Gentile, purifying all of our hearts by faith ... We believe that through the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ we shall be saved, even as they” (Ac.15:9,11). But now, by Peter's recent actions, he was saying and living the opposite. Paul had also renounced the Law as a means of justification, but he was not going to go back to it.

### **Paul Dies to the Law as Grounds for Acceptance**

2:19 *“For I through the law am dead to the law, that I might live unto God.”* All the Law had done for Paul was show him his own helplessness. Therefore, he died to the law. Paul turned from the Law as a means of salvation, acceptance, or perfection. Never again could he look to it, as the Galatians were doing, as a ground of acceptance with God. Now his life was entirely a life of faith.

## Dead to the Old Covenant—Alive to Christ and the New Covenant

2:20-21 *“I am crucified with Christ: nevertheless I live; yet not I, but Christ liveth in me: and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me, and gave himself for me. I do not frustrate [or make void] the grace of God: for if righteousness come by the law, then Christ is dead in vain.”*

When Paul met Christ, he died to the Law as a means of acceptance with God. Paul's righteousness came from Christ alone (Phil. 3:9). Paul was dead to the Law, and dead to his old life. He was “crucified with Christ” but risen with Him to live a new life. Paul allowed Christ to live His life in him, and flow through him. All of this was possible only by a life of faith, a relationship. Paul was joined as a branch to the Vine and drew his life from Him.

*“I do not frustrate [or make void] the grace of God: for if righteousness come by the law, then Christ is dead in vain.” (2:21).* If Paul was still attempting by the works of the law to secure God's acceptance, he would be making void the grace of God. This is precisely what the Galatians were doing. They had “fallen from grace” in seeking to be justified by the law. To ascribe saving power to the Law was really to annul the death of Christ and to deny its redeeming grace. If men could be justified by doing good works, there would have been no need for Christ to come to earth to die. “If righteousness come by the law, then Christ is dead for nought.”

\* \* \* \* \*

## Summary of Chapter Two

### 2:1-10 – The Jerusalem Council:

- 2:1 Paul went up to the famous Jerusalem Council and met the Twelve apostles for the first time.
- 2:2 Before the Council began he met *privately* with the main leaders to create an understanding.
- 2:3-4 False brethren smuggled into the Council tried to forward their legalistic agenda. They tried to force circumcision upon Titus, but the Council (which included the Twelve and other top leaders) would not agree to their demands. Titus was not circumcised.
- 2:5 Paul would not compromise the truth so all Gentiles (including the Galatians) could remain free.
- 2:6 The top leaders, including the Twelve, did not add to or take away anything from Paul's message.
- 2:7-9 Instead of being in conflict with Paul, as his enemies were claiming, the Twelve apostles and top leaders recognized Paul's apostolic ministry as being equal to Peter's. Thus, they extended the right hand of fellowship to him.
- 2:10 The prominent Jewish leaders of the Church asked Paul, the leader of the Gentile churches, to please remember the poor of the mother land of Israel. Paul was eager to help them.

### 2:11-14 – Peter Wavers Shortly After the Jerusalem Council

- 2:11 Peter visited Antioch after the Council, but Paul had to rebuke him for acting in a disorderly manner. (Peter knows he is wrong and gives no rebuttal. That Paul could rebuke Peter shows his authority certainly is no less than Peter's ... another point for the Galatians to consider.)
- 2:12 Peter ate with Gentiles, but when ritual-keeping Jews came from Jerusalem, he left the table.
- 2:13 Peter's example caused other Jews (including Barnabas) to act the same way.  
A stigma of uncleanness was being cast upon the Gentile converts.
- 2:14 Peter lived like a Gentile, but in this case acted as though Gentiles should live like Jews.  
His actions suggested that living like Jews conferred a greater sanctity than faith in Christ could.  
Thus, Peter was “compelling Gentiles to live as Jews.”

### 2:15-17 Jews and Gentiles Equally Justified by Faith Without Works of the Law

In 2:15-17, Paul reasons that if Jews seek to be justified by Christ, then they are sinners just like the Gentiles. He puts Jews and Gentiles all in the same category. All have sinned, and all need a Savior. If Christ's Gospel makes a Jew a sinner as much as a Gentile, does this make Christ a minister of sin? Is He making the sin problem worse? Absolutely not, but Jews who know the Law and break it and Gentiles who do not know the Law and break it all need forgiveness equally. All have sinned!

### 2:18-21 Paul Dies to the Law (Old Covenant) and Is Alive to Christ (New Covenant)

In 2:18, Paul says he will not build again what he formerly destroyed (a reference to reviving Jewish observances that he had renounced in the past.) The implication is directed against Peter, who was doing this very thing. In 2:19, Paul says he will never look again to the Law as a grounds for acceptance with God. All the Law had done for Paul was show him his own helplessness. He died to the Law and to his past life. 2:20-21 - He would live entirely by the life of faith—the faith of the Son of God. It is making the grace of God *void* to rely upon the works of the law. If a man could make himself righteous by the works of the law, why was it necessary for Christ to come to earth and die?

# Chapter Three

## A Spell Cast Over the Galatians

3:1 *“O foolish Galatians, who hath bewitched you, that ye should not obey the truth, before whose eyes Jesus Christ hath been [openly] set forth, crucified among you?”* Someone had “cast a spell” over the Galatians. There was such a personality change among them that Paul could scarcely recognize them. An evil spirit had overtaken them—the same evil spirit that was energizing the Judaizers. It is so important who we open our hearts to because we become like those we listen to. We will have the same spirit they have! Eve listened to the Serpent, and the longer she listened, the more she became like him and the more she received his nature. Then she acted like him. One of the most effective ways to determine whether a person has wisdom is by watching *who* they go to for advice. The Galatians were beguiled by the Serpent who was operating through the Judaizers (cf. 2 Cor.11:3-4) and now they were not obeying the truth.

### Their Eyes Diverted From “Christ Crucified”

*“Before whose eyes Jesus Christ hath been [openly] set forth, crucified among you?”* Paul had clearly portrayed Christ as the One who was crucified for them. “Christ crucified” was all they needed for salvation and perfection. This was a fundamental teaching of St. Paul (cf. 1 Cor. 2:2). But now their eyes were turned away from Christ unto *supplements*. Remember, the false teachers had not actually denied the work of Christ. They taught that Christians would attain to a fuller salvation and higher sanctity and a superior place in the Church if they would obey the requirements of the Jewish law. In other words, they were saying that observing Jewish rituals could add something that Christ's sacrifice could not. This teaching is actually an insult to the blood of Christ. Anything that man *adds* to the Gospel brings bondage.

### How Did You Receive the Spirit? by Faith, or by Abstaining From Pork?

3:2-5 *“This only would I learn of you, Received ye the Spirit by the works of the law, or by the hearing of faith? Are ye so foolish? having begun in the Spirit, are ye now made perfect by the flesh? Have ye suffered so many things in vain? if it be yet in vain. He therefore that ministereth to you the Spirit, and worketh miracles among you, doeth he it by the works of the law, or by the hearing of faith?”*

Paul reasons, “How did you receive the baptism in the Holy Spirit? Did you receive the Spirit by faith, or by observing some Jewish ritual? What about the mighty miracles that were performed among you? Were they done by faith, or because you abstained from pork? The Galatians had started out so well. Every spiritual blessing they received was by grace through faith. The Galatian cities had been visited by revival power. People were born again by faith and healed by faith. They received the Spirit by faith. Miracles and spiritual gifts were demonstrated by faith, and they were flourishing in all the blessings of the Lord. Now they were trying to be “made perfect by the flesh.” For the second time, Paul calls them “foolish”—foolish for being beguiled by the false teachers, and foolish for choosing “the flesh” over supernatural faith for a means of finding perfection.

*Have ye suffered so many things in vain? if it be yet in vain.* Suffering and hardship are the cost of being a real Christian, but they are followed by rich eternal rewards. Paul asks, “Was all your persecution and reproach for nothing? Are you going to forfeit your eternal crown.” The Galatians were being seduced from the path. They were coming short of the glory of God; they would miss the mark. In turning from the emphasis of faith, some would even revert to their old lifestyles and be lost.

## **The Goal of Paul's Preaching—Perfection**

All of Paul's preaching, teaching, and striving was for one main objective—to present every man perfect in Christ. (Col.1:28-29, I Thes. 3:10, Heb. 2:10). His goal was not only to get men into heaven, but to see them hit the mark for their lives. Anything less than this is sin (Rom. 3:23). Paul wanted to present a mature, unblemished bride to the Lord, even as a father would prepare his daughter for marriage (See 2 Cor.11:2-4). Paul was aware that false concepts would produce evil fruit and bondage in his converts, thus, he protested vehemently to the young Galatian believers.

### **Abraham and All His True Sons Are Justified by Faith**

3:6-9 “*Even as Abraham believed God, and it was accounted to him for righteousness [Gen.15:6]. Know ye therefore that they which are of faith, the same are the [sons] of Abraham. And the scripture, foreseeing that God would justify the [Gentiles] through faith, preached before the gospel unto Abraham, saying, In thee shall all nations be blessed. So then they which be of faith are blessed with faithful Abraham.*”

Abraham, the father of the Israelite nation, (the one all the Jews looked to) was justified by faith, not works (Rom. 4:1-8), and he was justified by faith long before the Law was given. Abraham was justified by faith, even being uncircumcised (Rom. 4:9-12). The Scripture says, “He believed God” and this was reckoned to him for righteousness (Gen.15:6). A believing heart pleases God. A believing heart is an open heart, a soft and listening and accepting heart. It is a heart God can change. When God spoke to Abraham and he believed, God attributed righteousness to him. Abraham is a *pattern* for all the redeemed to come. We are justified by believing God's message of His Son. Even Nineveh, a Gentile city, was spared judgment because they “believed God” (Jonah 3:4-10).

### **The Law Cannot Bless, it Can Only Curse**

3:10-12 “*For as many as are of the works of the law are under the curse: for it is written, Cursed is every one that continueth not in all things which are written in the book of the law to do them. [Deut. 27:26]; But that no man is justified by the law in the sight of God, it is evident: for, The just shall live by faith [Hab. 2:4]; And the law [rests not on] faith: but [declares], The man that doeth them shall live in them” [Lev.18:5].* The folly of seeking for superior sanctity by legal observance is made even more evident as Paul turns to another phase of his argument. Every blessing which his readers enjoy has been received by faith, not by the Law of Moses. Paul now argues—“Not only is the Law unable to bless, it can only curse.”

All who fail to keep the requirements of the Law unflinchingly are condemned and under the curse of Deuteronomy 27:15-26. “For as many as are of the works of the law are under the curse: for it is written, ‘Cursed is every one that continueth not in all things which are written in the book of the law to do them’ (Deut. 27:26). Judged by such a standard, no man can be justified in the sight of God. Even the Old Testament Scriptures make no promise of justification to those who keep the law but instead point to justification by faith: “But that no man is justified by the law in the sight of God, it is evident: for, *The just shall live by faith*” (a quote from Habakkuk 2:4, cf. Psa.143:2). Even the Law points to justification by sovereign pardon, not works (Psa. 32:1-2; Rom. 4:6-8).

“And the law [rests not on] faith: but [declares], *The man that doeth them shall live in them*” The man who keeps the law must keep it perpetually. Leviticus 18:5 commands perfect performance under Law to win divine approval. Of course, this perfect performance is more than we can accomplish. Therefore, the law is only a curse and we must cast ourselves upon faith in Christ

## **Redeemed From the Curse of the Law**

3:13-14 *“Christ hath redeemed us from the curse of the law, being made a curse for us: for it is written, Cursed is every one that hangeth on a tree: [to the end] That the blessing of Abraham might come on the Gentiles through Jesus Christ; that we might receive the promise of the Spirit through faith.”*

The Law brought a curse for any disobedience to its demands, yet it had no power to bless. The Law offered no power to keep the Law. A “No Smoking” sign offers no help to a smoker. It can only condemn a person for its violation. No one can meet the righteous demands of God's laws, and therefore, all men under the Law are under the “curse” of the Law. All men are sinners.

Christ was “made a curse for us” in that He “became sin” upon the cross (2 Cor. 5:21, Isa. 53:6). The “cup” which Christ had to drink in the Garden of Gethsemane was the cup of iniquity. At the moment He received it, He became sin for us. The Father laid upon Him the iniquity of us all. His substitutionary death upon the cross released us from the curse of sin. To “redeem” means to pay the purchase price, in this case, of someone in bondage. Christ took the place of the guilty. He paid our debt in full upon the cross and released us from the bondage of sin. Yet the very manner of His death involved an unspeakably high price; it involved extreme humiliation, disgrace, and shame.

### **Christ Became a Curse to Destroy the Curse**

*“Cursed is every one that hangeth on a tree.”* According to Deuteronomy 21:23, a man who was hung upon a tree was cursed. Although the Jews did not use crucifixion as a means of execution, they did hang the dead bodies of criminals on a post or stake by their hands as a mark of great dishonor. Thus, the disgrace of execution was further intensified by hanging. The shame of “hanging” was a testimony in God's presence that a just and sufficient penalty had been paid. Furthermore, it was a representation of God's abhorrence of sin.

According to the requirement of Jewish law, the body had to be buried before nightfall (Jn.19:31), but while it remained exposed in plain view, it was a public proclamation that sin had been thoroughly punished. Paul's reference to Deuteronomy 21:22-23 indicates how truly Christ, in his death, endured the utmost shame and suffering for the sins of the world, even while He was completely innocent. Peter says, “the just [suffered] for the unjust, that he might bring us to God” (1 Pet. 3:18).

### **Christ Releases All the Blessings of Abraham**

Christ endured immense suffering in order that the blessings which had been promised to Abraham might come to all who would put their faith in Him, out of every nation, tribe, and people. One of those blessings is the marvellous gift of the Holy Spirit, a gift received by faith and not by works, a fact which Paul made the Galatians admit (3:2). To receive the Holy Spirit is a true mark of salvation (Rom. 8:9, 1 Cor. 6:19). It is salvation's seal.

The baptism in the Holy Spirit is necessary for Christian perfection. Living in the Spirit and walking in the Spirit enable a believer not to fulfill the lusts of the flesh. The Holy Spirit produces all of the beautiful fruits of the Spirit. The subject of the Holy Spirit is mentioned three times in 3:1-14. The baptism in the Holy Spirit is an important part of redemption's package. The Spirit was sent on the Day of Pentecost when God opened the door of faith to the Jews and Gentiles alike.

## **Promise to Abraham — Greater Than the Law of Moses**

The Judaizers who were troubling the Galatians were willing to concede that Abraham was justified by faith, and that the Galatian believers had been accepted by God through their faith in Christ. However, they contended that the Law of Moses, having been “added” after the promise to Abraham, was therefore binding upon the descendants of Abraham and upon all who expected to receive the promises which had been made to Abraham. The legalists agreed that justification was by faith, but only for those who had *also* observed the Mosaic law. In 3:15-22, Paul refutes this. In verse 15 he explains that God's character and promises are not altered.

### **If a Man's Covenant Cannot Be Changed, Certainly God's Cannot**

3:15 “*Brethren, I speak after the manner of men; Though it be but a man's covenant, yet if it be confirmed, no man disannulleth, or addeth thereto.*” To make his point clear, Paul uses a common illustration. If an agreement between men is once signed and sealed, it cannot be annulled or altered. For example, if a man has a last will and testament that has been officially confirmed, no one else can set it aside or add a supplement. Now if this be true among men, Paul reasons, much less can the gracious promise which God made to Abraham be changed by any subsequent requirement or demand. If a human agreement, once ratified, cannot be annulled or overlaid by new stipulations, how can God's generous promise to Abraham and his spiritual descendants be made void or altered by the subsequent giving of Moses' Law.

### **The Promise Comes Through Abraham's “Special” Seed**

3:16 “*Now to Abraham and his seed were the promises made. He saith not, And to seeds, as of many; but as of one, And to thy Seed, which is Christ.*” “Abraham's seed” refers to the following:

- His natural seed, the Israelites (Many of these Jews were unbelievers)
- His spiritual seed (Jews and Gentiles) - those who are of faith
- The Lord Jesus Himself (The Heir through whom came all the promises)

Paul focuses upon Christ, Abraham's special “Seed”. Paul insists that God's gracious promise to Abraham and his descendants is realized only in and through a special Seed of Abraham—the Lord Jesus Christ Himself. Only through this *Seed* would “all the nations of the earth be blessed.” And “if we are Christ's, then we are Abraham's seed, and heirs according to the promise” (3:29). From the very beginning, not all of Abraham's descendants were heirs of his promises. For example, Ishmael and Esau were not heirs (cf. Jn. 8:39,40). The promises were only for those of the faith line.

### **Moses' Law Does Not Make Void the Promises to Abraham**

3:17-18 “*And this I say, that the covenant, that was confirmed before of God in Christ, the law, which was four hundred and thirty years after, cannot disannul, that it should make the promise of none effect. For if the inheritance be of the law, it is no more of promise: but God gave it to Abraham by promise.*” God promised Abraham, “in thy Seed shall all the earth be blessed.” This is the promise of the coming Redeemer who would justify all by faith. The Law which came 430 years later could not change the conditions of the promised inheritance, which is received by faith.

This 430 years starts from the time Abraham came into Canaan and sojourned in Egypt (Gn.12:1-10) *until* the time the Law was given. Exodus 12:40 says, “Now the sojourning of the children of Israel who dwelt in Egypt [and Canaan] was four hundred and thirty years”. Israel made their exodus from Egypt 430 years from the time Abraham first sojourned in Egypt. In the year of departure from Egypt, they came to Mount Sinai, at which time the Law was given by Moses. (See page 32).

## The Purpose of the Law—To Make Sin Exceedingly Sinful

3:19 “Wherefore then serveth the law? It was added because of transgressions, till the seed should come to whom the promise was made; and it was ordained by angels in the hand of a mediator.” The Age of the Law was inserted only for a time to show men their sinfulness and the need of the coming Redeemer. “It was added because of transgressions.” The Law was a arrow pointing to the promised Seed who could give true forgiveness and sonship. *All nations* of the world would be blessed, (Jew and Gentile together) by faith in Christ. Once again, Paul wants the Galatians to know that the Age of the Law was inferior and temporary. Its purpose was only to show men the problems in their hearts and point them to Christ, the only One who can justify.

- The Law offers no power to keep it. The Law gives no life! (Gal. 3:21).
- The Law only shows us what is wrong. “By the Law is the knowledge of sin” (Rom. 3:20).
- The Law is for the lawless (1 Tim.1:9). A No Smoking sign is only for smokers, not non smokers.
- The Law only defines sin. “I had not known lust except the law had said, do not covet” (Rom. 7:7).
- The Law could only curse, not bless. (Gal. 3:13).
- The Law can only condemn. “By the works of the Law shall no flesh be justified” (Gal. 2:16).
- The Law makes sin become “exceedingly sinful” (Rom. 7:12-13).
- The Law shows our helpless state, and points to our blessed Redeemer (Gal. 3:19).
- The Law makes nothing perfect, but a better hope does, by which we draw nigh to God (Heb.7:19). (Access to God, a relationship, God reasoning and speaking to us: these things change our heart.)

“*And it was ordained by angels in the hand of a mediator.*” On Mount Sinai the Law was given to Moses the mediator, by angels (cf. Acts 7:53). It was unlike the promise God gave to Abraham, for the Lord Himself gave this promise to Abraham. There were no angels or mediators involved.

### The Promise to Abraham (Immutable) / The Law of Moses (Conditional)

3:20 “*Now a mediator is not a mediator of one, but God is one.*” A mediator is used only when there are two parties, but in this case there were not two parties. God was the only party here. (“God is one” - the Father and Son made this promise to Abraham.) Paul is comparing the superiority of the promise God made to Abraham with the inferior Law that was given through the mediator Moses.

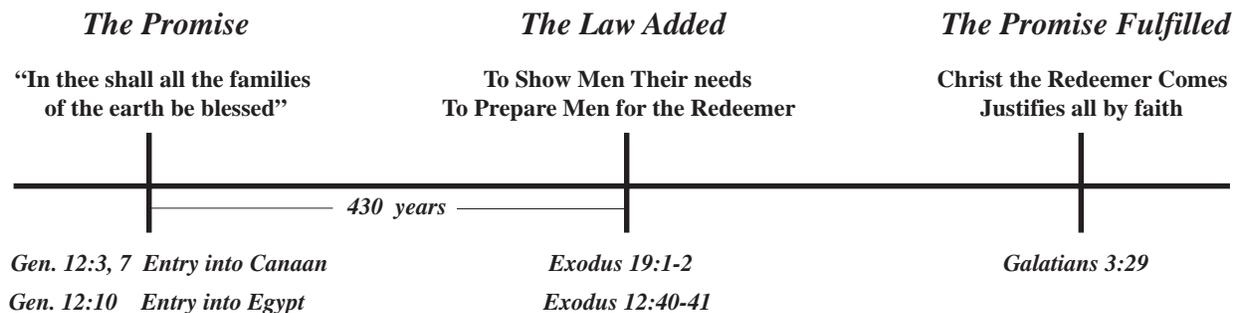
Promise to Abraham – Given by God (Gen.12:3 12:7) - (repeated in 13:14-17 15:2-6 17:4,5 22:15-18)	
(immutable)	Involved no mediator There were not two parties No conditions to be met.
	God promised a land when he was a stranger in it, and a <i>seed</i> when he was childless. He promised an inheritance (physical and spiritual), and that all the families of the earth would be blessed through his Seed (the Redeemer). Abraham believed God, and for this he was accounted righteous.

The Law of Moses – Administered by angels	
(conditional)	Had a mediator, Moses Involved two parties With conditions to be met

A mediator suggests there are at least two parties involved. Moses was a mediator of the Law, standing between God and man. The Law had conditions which men actually could not meet. “If you keep all the law, you will be blessed.” But the *promise* given to Abraham did not involve two parties. It was not really between God and Abraham. It was made between God the Father and God the Son (See p.33, Genesis 15). Thus, the promise of a coming Redeemer who would “bless all the families of the earth” was *immutable*. The promise to Abraham did not depend on Abraham.

When Abram placed his foot in the land of Canaan for the first time, God began to *confirm* the promises He had made to him. In Genesis 12:2, God said He would make a great nation out of Abram. Still, he did not even have one child. In Genesis 12:3, He says “in thee [in his seed] all the families of the earth would be blessed.” As Abram passed quickly through the land, observing it along the way, the Lord appeared to him and repeated, “Unto thy seed will I give this land” (12:6,7). This is the promise God made to Abraham. The promise involved a land, a people, an inheritance, and a special Seed (a Redeemer) through whom all the families of the earth would be blessed. Abraham believed God, and it was counted unto him for righteousness. This promise, *confirmed upon Abraham's entrance into the land*, marks the beginning of the 430 years of which Paul speaks in Galatians 3:17. Moses' Law was given exactly 430 years later on Sinai, but Paul says the Law of Moses cannot *in any way* alter God's promises to Abraham which are inherited by faith.

Still moving in a southerly direction, Abram continued all the way through Canaan, with numerous herds and flocks. He could not remain in Canaan because of a severe famine, and he came still further south into Egypt (Gen.12:9-10). Setting his foot upon Egyptian soil for the very first time marks the beginning of the 430 years which Abraham's seed would sojourn in and out of Egypt (cf. Ex.12:40-41). This is the same 430 years mentioned by Paul in Galatians 3:17.



- Genesis 12:2-3 - The promise God made to Abram is confirmed upon entrance into Canaan.
- Genesis 12:7 - God *in Christ* (pre-incarnate Christ) appears to Abram, confirming the promise.
- Genesis 13:14-17 God *repeats* the promise: the land of Canaan will be his.  
His seed will be as the dust of the earth ...an innumerable multitude.
- Genesis 15:5 His seed will be as the stars of heaven ... an innumerable multitude.
- Genesis 15:18 Canaan is his. (*The place* where the Redeemer will come and bless all nations).
- Genesis 22:15-18 The promise is repeated, after Abraham by faith is willing to offer his only son.  
His seed is to be as the stars of heaven - his spiritual seed (believers of all nations).  
His seed is to be as the sand of the sea - his physical seed (the Jews)  
In his special SEED (Christ), all nations of the earth will be blessed.

The original promise God gave to Abraham is recorded in Genesis 12:2-3. God *repeats* the promise over and over again. God's promises to Abraham could not be earned. All Abraham was required to do was believe and obey. Abraham was the friend of God. Abraham walked with God, talked with God, worshipped God, and loved God. How could faith *not* thrive in his heart?

The promise that Abraham would inherit the earth, that his Seed would bless all nations, that he and his descendants would inherit the land of Canaan—would all be brought to pass by faith. Abraham was not able to bring any of these promises to pass. He was unable to have children. He and his wife were beyond the years of bearing. Every promise would be inherited by grace, through faith. In Genesis 15, we will see that God's promises were immutable. Abraham was powerless to bring any of the promises to pass, except by believing and obeying. It was by faith, not works.

## **The Immutability of the Promise to Abraham**

### **Genesis 15**

In Genesis 15:2-4, Abraham still had no children and he was growing older. Yet, God had promised that his descendants would be innumerable. Therefore, Abraham asks, “Lord, are you going to fulfill this promise through my trusted steward, Eliezer. Is he going to be my heir?” God assured Abraham that Eliezer was not his heir, but someone born “from his own loins” would be the heir. In verse 5, the Lord took Abraham out at night to look at a clear sky. God asked: “Can you count the stars, Abraham? Well, so shall your seed be!” “And Abraham believed in the Lord, and he counted it to him for righteousness” (15:6.) The promise of being “a father of many nations” was only going to be fulfilled by faith, by a believing heart. The Lord was now going to *reaffirm* His promise to Abraham by a covenant.

In Genesis 15:9-12, the Lord instructs Abraham to take certain animals, slay them, and divide them in half. In those times, the sealing of a covenant was confirmed by having both parties of the covenant walk together between the divided carcasses of the animals. Thus, Abraham took these animals and claved them into two parts, laying one part on the right side, and the other part on the left side. Through this pathway of divided sacrifices, both God and Abraham were to walk together, thus sealing the covenant. But this never happened! Suddenly, as the sun was going down, “a deep sleep fell upon Abram; and behold, an horror of great darkness fell upon him” (15:12).

#### **Horror of Great Darkness — To Show Only God Can Bring the Promises to Pass**

This will happen in your life too when God meets you and gives you special promises. He will pass you through this experience of “a horror of great darkness” so that you will realize how helpless you are, and how impossible it is in your own strength and abilities to fulfill the promises He has made to you. It is a terrible sense of helplessness and loneliness, and you feel enveloped with darkness (cf. Isa. 50:10).

#### **Abram Not a Participant of the Covenant**

The parties of the covenant should naturally have been God and Abraham. But Abraham was in a deep sleep. Normally God and Abraham would have passed between those divided sacrifices and sealed the covenant. Such was not the case. Instead, two others passed ... “Behold a smoking furnace, and a burning lamp passed between those pieces.” (15:17). The Smoking Furnace is a symbol of God the Father. Hebrews 12:29 says, “Our God is a consuming fire.” The Burning Lamp, of course, is representative of the Lord Jesus Christ, the Light of the World.

Who passed between those divided sacrifices? It was none other than God the Father and God the Son. These two made an immutable covenant between themselves to give the land of Canaan to Abraham and his seed forever. Therefore, this promise can never be broken. It was not a covenant between God and man, but between the Father and Son. Abraham was not a participant of the covenant. This covenant / promise involved much more than a guarantee of the land belonging to Abraham and his seed forever. It was also an agreement between God the Father and the Son that the Son Himself would be a sacrifice for the sins of the world *on that very land*. Therefore, the promise to Abraham was immutable—that his Seed (The Redeemer) would bless all the families of the earth. It was settled before the foundation of the world that He should be the Lamb slain for the sins of the world (Rev.13:8, 1 Pet.1:19-20). It was also determined before the world began, that all men, both Jew and Gentile, should be justified by faith in Him.

## **The Law Shows Men Their Need — Paves the Way for the Promised Redeemer**

3:21-22 *“Is the law then against the promises of God? God forbid: for if there had been a law given which could have given life, verily righteousness should have been by the law. But the scripture hath concluded all under sin, that the promise by faith of Jesus Christ might be given to them that believe.”*

The Law (which came 430 years after the promise) was not in opposition to the promises. The Law was simply unable to give any spiritual life. It gave no one any power to change. It only revealed their problems. The Law was never intended to clear men of sin, it was only to show their sins and “conclude all under sin” and point them to the coming Redeemer. Thus, the Law paved the way for fulfillment of the promise to all who put their faith in Christ.

### **The Law—a Tutor for Children**

3:23-25 *“But before [the] faith came, we were kept under the law, shut up unto the faith which should afterwards be revealed. Wherefore the law was our [tutor] to bring us unto Christ, that we might be justified by faith. But after that faith is come, we are no longer under a [tutor].”*

The Law did play an essential part in the plan of God. Paul likens the Age of the Law to a child conducted to and from school by a tutor. The word “schoolmaster” in the KJV leads to a wrong conception of Paul's metaphor. The word used for *schoolmaster* defines an office which does not exist in modern times. The “pedagogue” or *child conductor* in the days of Paul was a trusted servant, usually a slave, whose duty was not merely to lead his master's son to school, but in some measure to supervise his manners and morals. He was not qualified to instruct, nor was he given authority to control, but he was appointed to attend and safeguard the child until he reached maturity and was no longer in need of discipline and guidance.

Such was the place and function of the Mosaic Law, according to Paul. The Law was a stern tutor intended for the guidance of the Jewish race. It regulated outward actions, and prescribed right conduct. It commanded certain checks upon evil until those under its jurisdiction were ready for the spiritual freedom to be found in Christ. The Law prepared men for faith in Christ, and Christ is the Object of our faith. We are brought to Him that we might be justified by faith.

### **Graduation From Childhood to Adulthood**

*“But after that faith is come, we are no longer under a schoolmaster.”* (3:25). Now that you have come to Christ and the New Covenant, you are no longer under the tutor or Old Covenant, reasons Paul. This is like a graduation from childhood to the status of an adult. He is no longer a minor, but an adult, and able to partake of the inheritance. He now enjoys the liberty of a full-grown son—“For ye are all the [sons] of God through faith in Christ Jesus.”

3:26 *“For ye are all the [sons] of God by faith in Christ Jesus.”* Suddenly, Paul shifts his emphasis on the relation of the Jews to the Law. Now, with the coming of the Seed “in whom all families of the earth will be blessed,” Gentiles as well as Jews can have ready access to the spiritual blessings of God. Therefore, Paul turns to his mostly Gentile congregation in Galatia with the assurance: “Ye are all the [sons] of God by faith in Christ Jesus.” The word is *sons* here, not “children.” The outstanding difference between the Old Testament Law and the New Testament Faith is the difference between a child-heir and an adult who has come of age and is able to partake of the promised inheritance. Paul later asks, “After growing up, why do you want to be a child again?”

## **Everyone Who is in Christ Can Be An Equal Heir of the Blessings**

3:26-29 *“For ye are all the [sons] of God by faith in Christ Jesus. For as many of you as have been baptized into Christ have put on Christ. There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither bond nor free, there is neither male nor female: for ye are all one in Christ Jesus. And if ye [be] Christ’s, then are ye Abraham’s seed, and heirs according to the promise.”*

Paul is all inclusive here in these closing verses. *All* are sons of God who trust in Christ. All are heirs to a rich inheritance. All who are baptized into Christ have “put on Christ.” To *put on Christ* is to be clothed with Christ. It is to take upon oneself the very virtues and excellencies of Christ. Just as a garment which one puts on envelops and identifies the person wearing it, so the person baptized in Christ is entirely involved with Christ and in the salvation brought by Him. These blessings are for *all* who are of faith. It does not matter about our race, whether we are Jew or Gentile, our gender, whether we are male or female, or our social status, whether we are bond or free. If we are Christ's, then we are truly Abraham's seed, and heirs of all the promises.

### **God is not a Respector of Persons**

The Judaizers were very class conscious. They believed that Jews were quite superior to Gentiles. Now that the Gentiles had been brought into the Church, they were compelling the Gentiles to live as Jews. But Paul is breaking down the racial barriers, the gender gaps, and the social differences. “There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither bond nor free, there is neither male nor female: for ye are all one in Christ.” By faith in Christ, the Gentiles become fellow-heirs with the Jews. Women as well and men could partake of all the same spiritual blessings. Even slaves and those of lower class could have the same spiritual benefits as those in higher society (See Acts 10:34-35).

To understand Paul's theology, we have to study all of his fourteen epistles together. Paul stated that “he taught the same things everywhere in all his churches” (1 Cor. 4:17). One of his major teachings was that of unity and equality. Let's read Ephesians 2:11-19:

“Wherefore remember, that ye being in time past Gentiles in the flesh, who are called Uncircumcision by that which is called the Circumcision in the flesh made by hands; That at that time ye were without Christ, being aliens from the commonwealth of Israel, and strangers from the covenants of promise, having no hope, and without God in the world:

But now in Christ Jesus ye who sometimes were far off are made nigh by the blood of Christ. For he is our peace, who hath made both one, and hath broken down the middle wall of partition between us; Having abolished in his flesh the enmity, even the law of commandments contained in ordinances; for to make in himself of twain one new man, so making peace; And that he might reconcile both unto God in one body by the cross, having slain the enmity thereby: And came and preached peace to you which were afar off, and to them that were nigh. For through him we both have access by one Spirit unto the Father. Now therefore ye are no more strangers and foreigners, but fellowcitizens with the saints, and of the household of God;”

## Summary of Chapter Three

- 3:1 The Judaizers had “cast a spell” over the Galatians. Their eyes had been turned away from the central theme of Christianity—from “Christ crucified” unto *supplements*.
- 3:2-5 Paul reasons, “How did you receive the Spirit? How were the miracles wrought among you? Were these spiritual blessings received by faith or because you abstained from pork and you observed some other Levitical rule? Obviously, it was by faith, not works. Paul warns them not to seek perfection “by the flesh” (man made rules), after starting out in the Spirit.
- 3:6-9 Abraham, the father of the Israelite nation (the one all the Jews look up to), was justified by faith. He believed God—this was counted unto him for righteousness. Abraham is a *pattern* for the redeemed. All are justified by *believing* the message of God's Son. Paul in Romans declared that Abraham was righteous by faith—before the Law and before being circumcised.
- 3:10-12 The only thing the Law can do is curse. There is a curse on all who fail to keep its requirements unfalteringly (cf. Deut. 27:26). Therefore, no man is justified by the Law. Even in the Old Testament it was declared—“The just shall live by faith” (Hab. 2:4). The reformation in Europe under Martin Luther was based on the recovery of this verse. Paul, in his theology in Romans, points to justification by sovereign pardon without works (Psa.32:1,2 Rom.4:6-8).
- 3:13,14 Christ took away the curse, becoming a curse for us when He was upon the cross. Anyone hung on a cross [post, stake] (Deut. 21:22,23) was considered accursed of God. While upon the cross, He paid our heavy debt *and* released all the blessings of Abraham's promises to us.
- 3:15-22 - The Judaizers conceded that Abraham was justified by faith, as were the Galatians, but contended that the Law of Moses, having been “added” after the promise to Abraham, was binding upon Abraham's descendants and *all* who expected to receive his promises.
- 3:15 Paul's rebuttal to this was that even man's covenants cannot be altered once agreed upon. If a human agreement cannot be annulled, certainly God's promise cannot be overlaid with new stipulations. The subsequent giving of the Law does not make void God's *original* promise.
- 3:16 The promise to Abraham would be fulfilled in a special Seed, the Redeemer. (All who are of faith, whether Jew or Gentile, would be blessed in this Seed, without the works of the Law).
- 3:17,18 Paul affirms that the Law of Moses, which was given 430 years after the promise, could not change the conditions of the promises, which are received *by faith*, not by Moses' Law.
- 3:19 The purpose of the Law was to show men their need and point them to the coming Redeemer. The Law was never intended to bring justification.
- 3:20 The Law of Moses had two parties and a mediator (Moses), and had conditions. Paul implies that the Promise had no mediator—there were not two parties and it had no conditions. Paul said “God is one”. The promise was created by the Father and Son. Therefore, the promise is immutable and cannot be changed. God predetermined to send his *Seed* to bless all nations.
- 3:21,22 The Law was not in opposition to the promise, it just could not “give life” or change the heart. The Law made all men (Jews / Gentiles) sinners, and pointed all to the coming Savior.
- 3:23-25 The Law was a “tutor”. It acted as a servant who conducted his master's child to school and somewhat supervised his manners and morals. He attended him until he reached maturity. The Law was a guide and disciplinarian to bring us unto Christ and the New Covenant. Going from the Law to the New Covenant was like a child no longer being a minor, but becoming an adult, and coming of age to receive an inheritance. Before that, he was only a child-heir.
- 3:26-29 Paul concludes “all those who believe in Abraham's Seed are equally blessed—irrespective of race (Jew or Greek), gender (male or female), or social status (bond or free, rich or poor).”

# Chapter Four

## **The Difference Between Infants and Mature Sons (Difference Between Being Under Law and Under Faith)**

In the opening verses of Chapter Four, Paul is continuing his theme from Chapter Three. He is comparing a minor with someone who comes of age and is able to claim his inheritance. Those who were under the Law were like minors. They were under “tutors and governors” until the father determined that they were mature enough to receive their inheritance.

### **Under the Law—a Child-Heir No Better Than a Servant (He is unable to claim his inheritance)**

4:1,2 *“Now I say, That the heir, as long as he is a child, differeth nothing from a servant, though he be lord of all; But is under tutors and governors until the time appointed of the father.”* Those living under the Law are likened to child-heirs. A child-heir is immature and cannot lay claim to the inheritance. In this respect, he is no different than a slave or household servant. Though he is an heir to a rich estate and “lord of all,” he cannot take possession of it because he is under age. During his childhood, he is controlled and restrained by “tutors and governors”—(*guardians* who have charge of his personal life, and *trustees* who watch over his future inheritance and property.) This subordinate and limited condition continues “until the day appointed by the father.”

### **Under the Law—a Child-Heir Learns Elementary Lessons of Outward Things**

4:3 *“Even so we, when we were children, were in bondage under the elements of the world:”* “We also [who were Israelites under the Law] when we were children, were in bondage, under our childhood lessons of outward things.” The Israelites under the Law were like children trained in all the Levitical ceremonies of Moses, which Paul calls “the elements of the world.” But these were only symbols and types of the coming New Covenant. In verses 9-10, Paul asks, “Why are you resorting to these weak and beggarly elements ... observing days, months, times, and years?” Paul wants to show his Galatian readers that their desire to adopt these Jewish rituals as a grounds of acceptance with God was like going back to kindergarten and gradeschool after they had graduated. They were relapsing into a second childhood and surrendering their inheritance.

### **Graduation of a Child-Heir to a Mature Son Who Gets the Inheritance**

4:4-7 *“But when the fulness of the time was come, God sent forth his Son, made of a woman, made under the law, To redeem them that were under the law, that we might receive the adoption of sons. And because ye are sons, God hath sent forth the Spirit of his Son into your hearts, crying, Abba, Father. Wherefore thou art no more a servant, but a son; and if a son, then an heir of God through Christ.”*

The coming of Christ (the Promised Seed) marked the period of release from spiritual childhood and servitude under the Law to the promised inheritance. This was “the time appointed by the Father.” “But when the fulness of the time was come, God sent forth his Son, made of a woman, made under the law, To redeem them that were under the law, that we might receive the adoption of sons.” *Adoption* in this case literally means “to be placed as a mature son over an inheritance.”

According to Paul, the Jews under the Law had been “shut up” in prison...under sin...and trained as children in outward ordinances, all in preparation for the Faith which would afterwards be revealed. Since the Law offered no power to change the heart but only produced guilt, the Jews should have been conditioned and eager to receive the Redeemer when He appeared.

### **Christ Was Born Under Law-Conditions to Ransom Those Under Law-Conditions**

4:4-5 “*But when the fulness of the time was come, God sent forth his son, made of a woman, made under the Law, To redeem them that were under the Law, that we might receive the adoption of sons.*” Christ was “born of a woman” with all the limitations of humanity. He was “born under the Law”—subject to all its restrictions, requirements, and demands, yet born “that he might redeem them that were under the Law.”

The whole purpose for God becoming a man was redemption. His birth at Bethlehem looked forward to the cross. Yet the ultimate purpose of redemption was for the redeemed to become fully developed “sons” (Heb. 2:10). Until Christ came, and until redemption was fully accomplished, the state of spiritual immaturity, sin, and bondage continued during the age of the Law. But after redemption had been achieved, believers (Jew and Gentile alike) could partake of the inheritance and enjoy the privileges of full-grown sons of God. For all believers, the childhood which belonged to the Law should be past, and the freedom of manhood begun.

### **The Proof That We Are Sons—God Gives Us the Spirit of His Son**

4:6 “*And because ye are sons, God hath sent forth the Spirit of His Son into our hearts, crying Abba Father.*” The proof that we are sons comes from the cry of the Son's Spirit which God has put within us. The apostle now returns to a subject he has mentioned twice before (3:2-5, 3:14), namely, that the Galatians have received the Holy Spirit. This is the evidence that God has received them, and they had the Spirit *before* the Judaizers ever visited Galatia and introduced the Mosaic Law.

4:7 “[*So that*] *thou art no more a servant, but a son; and if a son, then an heir of God through Christ.*” How foolish for the Galatians to fall back from their high position of sons of God to the standing of immature children or slaves under bondage to the beggerly elements of the Law. Everything they possessed came from “God through Christ”, not through the works of the Law.

Under the Law: (Works)

- They were servants in bondage, child-heirs whose position was no better than servants
- They were children being trained in elementary symbols and exteriors
- They were under sin, guilt, and the curse
- They had the promise of inheritance, but as children were not mature enough to have it

Under Faith: (Relationship)

- They were no longer servants, or children
- They were freed from sin and guilt
- They were full grown sons
- Their inheritance opened
- They received the Spirit

The Redeemer was born in the time of the Law, under all its limitations. Under the Law He perfectly fulfilled the Law. “Christ is the end [termination, fulfillment] of the Law to all who believe” (Rom.10:4). Now all our righteousness is found *in Him*. He has set us free from the curse of the Law.

## **Galatia—Though a Mostly Gentile Church, Had Turned Jewish**

4:8-11 *“Howbeit then, when ye knew not God, ye did service unto them which by nature are no gods. But now, after that ye have known God, or rather are known of God, how turn ye again to the weak and beggarly elements, whereunto ye desire again to be in bondage? Ye observe days, and months, and times, and years. I am afraid of you, lest I have bestowed upon you labour in vain.”*

It is obvious that the Galatians were essentially Gentile, for in the past they were idol worshippers. They had “done service unto them which by nature are no gods”. The Jews did not worship idols. The Galatians, by their Christian faith, had been set free from the bondage of idol worship. Now, in a very real sense, they were returning to their old lifestyles, but in another form. Heathenism and Jewish ritualism had much in common—both exercised many empty and lifeless forms in an attempt to *earn* favor from deities.

### **You Did Not Choose God, God Chose You**

Here Paul addresses his readers as Gentile converts. In their former state, they had been ignorant of the one true God. As idolaters, they had been subject to cruel bondage and experienced the fear and dread of those who worship deities which in reality are not deities at all. Through Christ, however, they had “come to know God”. Then Paul adds: “Really, it is not *you* who have come to know God, it is God who has known you.” Paul gives no credit to man. It is God who recognized and sought you and made you His sons, not you who recognized and sought after God. This was another way of emphasizing God's sovereignty and grace instead of glorifying man's achievement (Jn.15:16).

### **Why Turn Back to Something So Inferior?**

*“How turn ye again to the weak and beggarly elements, whereunto ye desire again to be in bondage? Ye observe days, and months, and times, and years.” (4:9a-10).* This is a reference to the Jewish rites which at one time had divine power and value but were now poor and feeble, since Christ had outdated them. “Days, months, times, and years” refers to the Jewish feasts and the Hebrew sacred calendar. There were so many details to the Levitical system that Peter said, it is “a yoke which neither our fathers nor we were able to bear” (Acts 15:10). All the feast days, offerings, ordinances, and circumcision have spiritual meaning. Yet these are not to be carried out any more in the physical realm. Only their spiritual meanings are to be applied to our lives. cf. Col. 2:14,16

“Blotting out the handwriting of ordinances that was against us, which was contrary to us, and took it out of the way, nailing it to his cross ... Let no man therefore judge you in meat, or in drink, or in respect of any holy day, or of the new moon, or of the sabbath days.” (Colossians 2:14,16)

The Galatians were abandoning and exchanging the freedom and sonship they had in Christ for a yoke of bondage. Paul said: *“I am [fearful for] you, lest I have bestowed upon you labour in vain.”* He had spent many months of faithful missionary work among the Galatians. Now enemies had sown another seed among them, and they were bearing thorns and briars (Heb. 6:8,9). Paul feared that his vineyard would be overrun with evil fruit and that much of his labor would be lost. He knew that if the Galatians continued on their present course they would surely miss the mark and come short of the glory of God. Not only would they come short of the mark, many of them would turn back to the world and be lost. For it is only by walking in the Spirit and living in the Spirit that believers can overcome the lusts of the flesh, but they were turning away from a life in the Spirit.

## **An Appeal For Restoration of Friendship**

Paul now makes an appeal to the old bond between himself and the Galatian churches. He seeks for a restoration of their love and loyalty. The tone of the apostle becomes more tender here.

4:12 *“Brethren, I beseech you, [become] as I am; for I [was] as ye are: ye have not injured me at all.”* “Become like me for I too have become like you.” Paul, a Jew, had become like a Gentile and put aside his pride of seeking justification by the works of the Law. He is asking the Galatians to do the same and be as he is. When Paul had visited Galatia earlier, they did him no wrong (they did not injure him at all) or oppose him for living as a Gentile without the Mosaic Law. Neither did they despise him because of a sickly appearance.

### **Their Former Love For Paul**

4:13,14 *“Ye know how through infirmity of the flesh I preached the gospel unto you at the first. And my temptation which was in my flesh ye despised not, nor rejected; but received me as an angel of God, [even] as Christ Jesus.”* The first time Paul came among the Galatians he was seriously ill. During the period of recuperation he preached the gospel and received a tremendous response. Paul's message was always confirmed with “mighty signs and wonders.” His preaching was not with enticing words of man's wisdom, but in demonstration of the Spirit and of power (1 Cor. 2:4). Like the Thessalonians, they accepted his preaching, not as the word of men, but as the very Words of God. (See 1 Thes. 2:13). The Galatians were not repulsed by the weakness and unattractiveness of the apostle. On the contrary, they received him “as an angel of God, even as Christ Jesus.” Their affection and acceptance of Paul was as fervent as it could have been to Jesus himself. But now that affection had been robbed by the Adversary who always comes to steal, kill, and destroy.

4:15 *“Where is then the blessedness ye spake of? for I bear you record, that, if it had been possible, ye would have plucked out your own eyes, and have given them to me.”* So gratified were the Galatians at Paul's first coming, and so thankful were they for his ministry that had brought them new birth and the infilling of the Holy Spirit, that no sacrifice for him would have been too great. If it had been possible, they would have plucked out their own eyes and have given them to him. This statement about “plucking out their eyes and giving them to him” may indicate that Paul suffered immensely from an eye disease. Why, then, was there such a change of attitude toward him? Is it because he is still proclaiming the same Gospel which formerly had brought them such delight?

4:16 *“Am I therefore become your enemy, because I tell you the truth?”* Paul has not changed, and his message has not changed. Why do they now count him as an enemy? Why does he have to appeal to them for restoration of the former love they had for him, and for the truth? Paul knows exactly why—they have been zealously affected by the Judaizers.

### **The Self-Seeking Judaizers**

4:17 *“They zealously affect you, but not well; yea, they would exclude you, that ye might affect them.”* Paul is saying, “They show zeal and concern for you but not with good motives; they would shut you out from others, that your zeal may be for them alone.” Here are the real motives of the proselytizing Judaizers—they wanted the affection and attention of the Galatians for themselves. They made the Galatians feel that they were on a lower spiritual level because they did not observe the Mosaic Law. Making them feel “excluded” from their fellowship, they were compelling them to adopt their rituals and follow them. Also, they were trying to separate the Galatians from Paul and his associates in order to have them completely under their spell and influence.

## The Galatians Were Zealous Only When Paul Was With Them

4:18 “*But it is good to be zealously affected always in a good thing, and not only when I am present with you.*” Paul is saying: “It is good to be zealous for the right cause at all times, not like you who are zealous only when I am with you.” While Paul was in Galatia they were zealous for his ways, but in his absence they were zealous for the wrong cause of the Judaizers. The Galatians were very inconsistent and doubleminded, and therefore, “unstable in all their ways” (Jas.1:8). Paul wishes that the passionate devotion which they showed him on his first visit might continue when he is absent from them.

The underlying motive of the aggressive Judaizers was *envy and jealousy*. They had a cause, an agenda, and it was to gratify their own lusts. “Some indeed preach Christ even of envy and [rivalry]; and some also of good will” (Phil.1:15).

## The Galatians Are Little Children

4:19-20 “*My little children, of whom I travail in birth again until Christ be formed in you, I desire to be present with you now, and to change my [tone of] voice; for I stand in doubt of you.*” Paul did not know which way they would go. He desires to be with them again, and speak with them. They were like the “little children” Paul describes in Ephesians: “... Children tossed to and fro with every wind of doctrine, by the sleight of men, and cunning craftiness, whereby they lie in wait to deceive” (Eph. 4:14).

While we are on the subject of “little children” we should understand that there are several ways to view this issue of children. In Galatians, Paul is comparing the old covenant Law with the new covenant of Faith. Those under the Law he likens to children, but those in the new covenant are likened to adults. Paul is seeking to make a simple point here. In the time of the Law they were like children who were not prepared to receive the inheritance. When Christ came, the inheritance opened and believers can now be made into true full-grown sons.

On the other hand, this truth needs to be balanced, for when a person becomes a Christian, this does not mean he or she is instantly mature and ready for a full inheritance. Believers are given “power to become the sons of God” as John 1:12 says. At new birth, we have the *potential* to come into full sonship and full inheritance. In 1 John 2:12-14, we see three levels of spiritual growth:

1. Little Children - who “know their sins are forgiven”.
2. Young Men - who “are strong, have overcome Satan, and the Word abides in them.”
3. Fathers - who “know Him who is from the beginning.” An intimate knowledge of God.

Paul terms the Galatians “little children.” This was the extent of their spiritual growth. The Corinthians and Hebrews were about on the same level, in need of “milk and not meat.” These believers were not even clear on the basics. (See Hebrews 5:11-14, I Corinthians 3:1-3.)

“*My little children, of whom I travail in birth again until Christ be formed in you.*” Christ must be fully formed in us. At new birth, there is a divine conception and birth within. Christ is born in us. “Christ in us” is our hope of glory (cf. Col.1:27). “Christ in us” must be nourished until He is fully developed within (Eph. 4:13). The very pain and anguish of soul which Paul endured in bringing the Galatian churches to birth—he is suffering all over again. He longs to have them transformed into the likeness of Christ, but their development has been almost aborted.

4: 21 *“Tell me, ye that desire to be under the law, [will] ye not hear the law?”* Paul asks: “You who want to be under the law, do you not understand, heed, or appreciate its message?” In the previous verses, Paul has appealed to the affection of his readers. Now he will appeal to their intelligence. Certainly, these who claimed to understand the Mosaic Law and were willing to be bound by its precepts, should appreciate a vivid illustration taken from the writings of Moses, from Genesis.

Abraham had tried, by his own works, to bring God's promises to pass. This account in Genesis furnishes a perfect parallel to that of the Galatian Christians, who were hoping to be saved by adding works to faith. Abraham had already been promised a Seed. Through his Seed, all the families of the earth would be blessed (Gen.12:2-3). As the years passed, he and Sarah were growing older and the promise was looking more and more impossible. In Genesis 16:1-5, Sarah suggested that God would fulfill the promise by having children through Hagar, a servant girl. Thus, Abraham and Sarah were trying to bring God's purposes to pass by their own thinking and by their own works. As a result, Ishmael was born, but he was “born after the flesh”. Ishmael was the product of what man could do. But Isaac, the son of Sarah, was the result of something only God could do. The birth of Isaac required a miracle of faith and grace. Isaac was the son of *promise*.

### **The Allegory of Hagar and Sarah** **4:22-31**

In the following allegory, Paul is going to compare the two covenants. He will do so by using:

- Two covenants . . . Law and Grace
- Two women . . . . . Hagar and Sarah
- Two sons . . . . . Ishmael and Isaac
- Two mountains. . . Sinai and Zion
- Two cities . . . . . Earthly Jerusalem and Heavenly Jerusalem

4:22-24a *“For it is written, that Abraham had two sons, the one by a bondmaid, the other by a freewoman. But he who was of the bondwoman was born after the flesh; but he of the freewoman was by promise. Which things are an allegory: for these are the two covenants; ”* Abraham had a wife, Sarah, and a bondmaid, Hagar. Each of these women had a son by Abraham. Hagar brought forth Ishmael, and Sarah had Isaac.

Ishmael was “born after the flesh.” He was the result of the natural mind and something man could produce (Gen.16:1-5). But Isaac was born because of a promise and it required faith and a miracle. Sarah was too old to have children. Therefore, the birth of Isaac was entirely supernatural. This was something that God alone could do. These two women and their sons are a profound representation of the old covenant of works, and the new covenant of promise which is obtained by faith.

4:24b-26 *“the one from the mount Sinai, [whose children are born into] bondage, which is [Hagar]. For this [Hagar] is mount Sinai in Arabia, and answereth to Jerusalem which now is, and is in bondage with her children.” But Jerusalem which is above is free, which [Sarah represents] is the mother of us all.”* Hagar represents the old covenant Law which was given upon Mount Sinai. Those born under the Law, like Hagar's son, are born of bondage. Hagar is analogous to Jerusalem of Paul's time, for Jerusalem at that time was in bondage with her children too. Earthly Jerusalem and most of her citizens were still in bondage to the old covenant and all of its traditions. But Heavenly Jerusalem, of which Sarah is a type, is free. She is the mother of all the redeemed who are of faith, both Jew and Gentile. Sarah herself was a person of faith (cf. Heb.11:11).

4:27 *“For it is written, Rejoice, thou barren that bearest not; break forth and cry, thou that travailest not: for the desolate hath many more children than she which hath an husband.”* (cf. Isa. 54:1). Here is another illustration of two women. This time it might represent the Church (composed primarily of Gentiles), and the nation of Israel. Israel considered the Lord to be her husband. But the Gentiles were without a heavenly Husband and desolate (spiritually fruitless). Now that Christ had come, the Gentiles who formerly were *barren* had many more children than Israel. “Jerusalem which now is” had only a handful of sons and daughters of faith, but the Heavenly Jerusalem was being filled with multitudes of sons and daughters of Sarah—those of faith.

4:28 *“Now we, brethren, as Isaac was, are the children of promise.”* Brethren, we are of Sarah's line, not the line of Hagar. We are children of promise and have received the inheritance because of faith, not because of works. We were not born into bondage as Hagar's son. We were born free as Isaac was, and we must stay that way. 5:1 “Stand fast therefore in the liberty wherewith Christ hath made us free, and be not entangled again with the yoke of bondage.”

### **The Carnal Always Persecute the Spiritual**

4:29-31 *“But as then he that was born after the flesh persecuted him that was born after the Spirit, even so it is now. Nevertheless what saith the scripture? [see Gen. 21:9-12] Cast out the bondwoman and her son: for the son of the bondwoman shall not be heir with the son of the freewoman. So then, brethren, we are not children of the bondwoman, but of the free.”*

The carnal always persecute those who are spiritual. It is never the other way around. Those who do *not* have the promises of God always envy and attack those who do. For example: Saul attacked David, but David never attacked Saul. Esau attacked Jacob, but Jacob never attacked Esau. And here, Ishmael mocked Isaac. See Genesis 21:9-12. The child of bondage persecuted the child who had the promises. And the Jews under the Law always attacked those who were of promise, those of faith in Christ. Consider the nature of the two sons. Ishmael was a “wild man,” a mocker (Gen.16:12, 21:9), but Isaac was a man of peace (Gen. 26:12-22). Someone with promises can afford to be gentle. Those without the promises are the ones who envy and terrorize and attack.

“Even so it is now.” Just as Ishmael and his descendants persecuted Isaac and his descendants in the past, even so it is now. The children of bondage under the Law (Jews and Judaizers) persecute the children of promise (people like Paul and the Galatians). Most of Paul's persecutions in the Book of Acts came from the Jews, not from the heathen or Romans. Ironically, the Romans often had to protect Paul from the jealous Scripture-quoting Jews who were seeking to kill him.

### **Those Under Law/Bondage Cannot Inherit What Those of Faith Can**

*Nevertheless what saith the scripture? Cast out the bondwoman and her son: for the son of the bondwoman shall not be heir with the son of the freewoman. So then, brethren, we are not children of the bondwoman, but of the free”* (4:30,31). The bondwoman and her son (the Law and her bondchildren, those of the works of the Law) will not be heir or have inheritance with the son of the freewoman—those of promise, of faith in Christ. Paul concludes: “So then, brethren, we are not children of the bondwoman, but of the free.” It is established then, that we (Paul and the Galatians) are not children of a bondwoman who was cast out of the presence of her lord and denied any share in the inheritance. But we are children of the free woman, children of the promise and heirs in the family of God. We are not in the spiritual line of Hagar, we are in the spiritual line of Sarah.

## The Allegory of Two Women

### HAGAR

(a bondswoman)  
Mother of the enslaved

#### Hagar's fruit

*Ishmael*

“Born of the flesh” - Works  
(Character: wild man, mocker - Gen.16:12 21:9)  
His birth—what man could produce  
No Inheritance

analogous to:

The Old Covenant  
Works

#### Mount Sinai

Earthly Jerusalem  
Her children in bondage  
The Jews under the Law

The Married Wife—Israel  
Has few children of faith

The Persecutors

### SARAH

(a freewoman)  
Mother of the free

#### Sarah's fruit

*Isaac*

“Born of promise” - Faith  
(Character: man of peace - Gen. 26:12-22)  
His birth—what only God could produce  
Full Inheritance

analogous to:

The New Covenant  
Faith

#### Mount Zion

Heb.12:18-24

Heavenly Jerusalem  
Her children are free  
All believers, Jew and Gentile

The Desolate Woman—Gentiles  
Now has many children of faith

The Persecuted

Notes:

The Jews who remained under the Law, who were trying to justify themselves by works, persecuted Jesus and the early Church. Thus, they were spiritual “Ishmaelites.” They were not people of promise, of faith. Today's legalists and fundamentalists who reject the baptism in the Holy Spirit, persecute and mock those who have it. Yet those who reject the Holy Spirit of promise will not have the quality of the fruit of the Spirit in their lives, and therefore, cannot inherit the greater promises. In a sense, these are spiritual Ishmaelites.

## **The State of the Church at Jerusalem** “Jerusalem which now is ... is in bondage”

Twenty-seven years had passed since Pentecost. The mother Church at Jerusalem continued to offer sacrifices in the temple and to observe all the Levitical ordinances instituted by Moses. “Jerusalem which now is,” was still in bondage, she and her children. Most of Jerusalem rejected Christ, but thousands who did receive Christ continued to observe all the rituals of Moses. This was the home church of the Twelve apostles, and of James the Lord's brother. It appears that the apostles in Jerusalem did not insist on a break with the past religion, but allowed it. Six months after writing Galatians, Paul visited Jerusalem (May, 58), but the Christian leaders asked him to observe the Law while visiting, just to accommodate Jewish believers (Ac. 21:20-26). The leaders agreed that the Gentiles did not need to observe Moses' Law, yet they permitted Jewish believers to do so. It was only Paul who insisted that the old covenant was past and that it was not necessary for the Gentiles *or Jews* to observe it. In all of Paul's epistles, you can detect the state of the people by the things he had to say to them. In 63 A.D., Paul wrote to the Hebrews. Here is the state of the Jerusalem Church:

- 2:1 They were not giving heed to the things which they had heard.
- 2:3 They were neglecting so great a salvation.
- 3:8 They were hardening their hearts.
- 3:12-14 Some had an evil heart of unbelief and were turning from the living God.
- 4:1-11 They were not entering into rest, or ceasing from their own works, ideas, or opinions.
- 5:11 They were dull of hearing. Paul had so much more to say, but they could not hear it.
- 5:12-14 They should have been teachers by this time, but were still infants requiring “milk.”
- 6:1-3 They had not progressed past the foundational teachings, and were not clear on the basics, and were not going on to perfection.
- 6:6 They were crucifying the Son of God afresh....by offering animal sacrifices, etc.
- 6:7-9 They were bearing *thorns* (works of the flesh) instead of *herbs* (fruit of the Spirit).
- 6:12 Some were slothful and impatient.
- 7:11,19 They were trying to come to perfection by Old Testament rituals. Paul told them that if the first covenant and priesthood had worked, God would not have raised up a new one (8:7).
- 10:1-3 They were still offering sacrifices. Paul explains that by *one* offering Christ has put away our sins forever (9:26, 9:28, 10:10, 10:12, 10:14).
- 10:26 Some were sinning wilfully (while others were sinning through ignorance).
- 10:35,36 Some were casting away their confidence, and had need of patience.
- 11:1-40 Paul preaches a whole chapter on *faith* because they were seeking perfection through rituals and works. Faith comes from *a relationship*, not rituals.
- 12:5-11 They had forgotten the exhortations not to despise the chastenings of the Lord.
- 12:8 Many were spiritually “illegitimate” because they refused the Father's corrections and did not bear His likeness.
- 12:12 They were feeble and discouraged; their hands were hanging down and their knees were weak.
- 12:15 They were troubled with bitterness and were failing to receive the grace of God.
- 12:16,17 They were in danger of losing their birthrights, as did Esau.
- 12:25 They were refusing Him who was speaking from heaven.
- 13:9 They were carried about with strange doctrines...Levitical ordinances and legalism.

The result of neglecting, not giving heed, refusing Him who is speaking from heaven, hardening the heart, and not ceasing from their own works, was this—the Jerusalem church was drying up and backsliding. They were discouraged and not entering into rest. This is the fruit of not making a break with the past religion. The same message applies to today's charismatic movement and all others who have experienced an awakening from God, but have not since moved on with God.

## Summary of Chapter Four

4:1-3 The Jews under the Law were like child-heirs. While under age, a child-heir cannot receive an inheritance and ranks no higher than a servant. The Jews under the Law were as children trained in the elementary symbols and types of the ordinances of Moses, and were under guardians. They remained in this subordinate condition until they were deemed “mature” for their inheritance.

4:4-7 Christ's coming marked the *release* from spiritual childhood unto the promised inheritance. He brought man to the new covenant—this is the promised inheritance. Christ did so by being born under the Law, subject to all its restrictions, yet fulfilling the Law, being the only Perfect Man. Christ opened the veil, and made it possible for men to come into God's presence and be fully redeemed. He opened all the treasures of redemption, giving us the Spirit as evidence that we are God's sons. Under the new covenant, we are no longer children-heirs looking ahead to a future inheritance, but we are grown sons who have the possibility of *receiving* the full inheritance.

4:8-11 The Galatians, essentially Gentile, were former idol worshippers. They had been freed from this terrible bondage by becoming Christians. Now they were going back into another form of bondage by adopting the numerous and empty rituals of the Judaizers, observing days, months, times, and years. The Galatians were going back to the old covenant and becoming *children* again. They were forfeiting the inheritance which mature sons can have under the new covenant, and relapsing into childhood where they were no different from servants. It was like graduating from high school and then going back to kindergarten and grade school.

4:12-16 Paul appeals to the old bond of friendship between himself and the Galatians. “Become like me for I too have become like you.” He was a Jew who had become like a Gentile and had put aside his pride of justification by works. He asks them to do the same and be as he is. They had not injured him in the past when he lived like this. Then he reminds them of how they had responded to him when he first came to Galatia. They received him as an angel, even as Christ Jesus, even when he was very sick. But now he has become their enemy because he is still preaching the same message that blessed them at the first. They had been “zealously affected” by the Judaizers.

4:17-18 The Judaizers were showing zeal and concern for the Galatians, but with ulterior motives. They wanted the affection and attention of the Galatians for themselves. Also they were attempting to separate them from Paul and his associates in order to have them completely under their spell. Paul said to the Galatians, “Zeal is good if it is for the right cause, but you are only zealous of my ways when I am with you. Now, in my absence, you are zealous for the wrong cause.”

4:19-20 Paul terms the Galatians “little children”. This was the extent of their spirituality. He did not know which way they would go and stood perplexed because of them. He was travelling in prayer all over again to bring them to maturity. He did not want them to come short of God's mark.

4:21-31 As for those who wanted to be under the Law of Moses, Paul reasons with them from the Law of Moses. Abraham had two sons, one by Hagar and one by Sarah. Hagar's son was born by man's thinking and engineering, but Sarah's son was born because of promise, and it required faith and a miracle. He presents a perfect parallel from Abraham's life of what the Galatians were trying to do. This is an allegory of the old and new covenants. The old covenant was like Hagar and her son. She, a bondwoman, brought forth a son of bondage. He was born as a result of man's thinking and doing. He represents works. The new covenant was like Sarah and her son. Sarah was a freewoman. Her son was born because of a promise. It required faith and a miracle. Those who are of faith are of the line of Sarah. Those who seek justification by faith are of her spiritual line. But those who seek justification by works are of Hagar's line. Paul says, “Galatians, you are of Sarah's spiritual line.”

# Chapter Five

Starting in chapter five, the apostle presses home the results of his arguments. He reaches the climax of his appeals. The first two chapters concerned Paul's apostolic authority. Chapters three and four dealt with the doctrine of justification by faith. The last two chapters are a practical application of how to maintain Christian freedom.

Paul was the most profound theologian of all times, yet he never isolated doctrine from practical living. On the contrary, he believed that doctrine should shape our lives. In many of Paul's epistles, he first presents a doctrinal stance and then follows it with practical applications. First he establishes his teachings and then he explains how to live in the light of those concepts. In chapters 5-6, Paul does just that by laying out a practical outworking of all he has said up to this point.

## **We Have Our Part in Staying Free**

5:1 “*Stand fast therefore in the liberty wherewith Christ hath made us free, and be not entangled again with the yoke of bondage.*” This verse is a good summary of chapter four; It is also a good preface for the practical exhortations which are to follow.

“Stand fast, then, in the freedom which Christ has given us, and turn not back again, to entangle yourselves in the yoke of bondage.” While it is true that we cannot set ourselves free from bondage, we must cooperate with God in being set free, and remaining free. God has his part, and we have our part. Paul commands us to stand fast in our freedom, and not to return to our bondages. In this case, the Galatians who had been made free in Christ, willingly listened to enticing speakers who brought them into Judaistic bondage to the Law.

Verse one reminds us of Isaiah's message to those in Babylonian exile. They were commanded to “shake themselves” and “loose themselves” from the bands of their necks (Isa. 52:2). God will not do everything for us. We have to listen and respond to the godly. The Galatians needed to recover themselves from the spell cast over them by the Judaizers from Jerusalem. The spiritual powers that can overtake people are incredible. But why do these powers overcome them?—Because they have closed their ears to the right men and willingly listened to seducers.

## **Relying on Circumcision for Salvation is to Sever Oneself From Christ**

5:2-4 “*Behold, I Paul say unto you, that if ye be circumcised, Christ shall profit you nothing. For I testify again to every man that is circumcised, that he is a debtor to do the whole law. Christ is become of no effect unto you, whosoever of you [who are seeking to be] justified by the law; ye are fallen from grace.*” The issue here is not mere circumcision. Certainly, circumcised persons can be saved. Paul is speaking of circumcision in the sense in which the Judaizing teachers imposed it, teaching that “except they were circumcised and kept the law of Moses, they could not be saved” (Acts 15:1,5). The sufficiency of Christ's redeeming work was being challenged.

In this case, if the Galatians submitted to circumcision as a means of salvation, if they were basing eternal life on circumcision, Paul declares that “Christ would profit them nothing, that they were debtors to do the whole law, that they were severing themselves from Christ, and that they were fallen from grace.” This would be a *renunciation* of the means of justification God had established. In no longer standing by grace, they would undertake the impossible task of being justified by the Law and then become debtors to do *the whole law*, a task which they were not capable of performing.

## **Righteousness Comes Through the Spirit, Through Faith**

5:5 *“For we through the Spirit [not through the flesh] wait for the hope of righteousness by faith.”* The only way we can ever be righteous is by the Spirit's work that is done in our hearts. This work of the Spirit is ongoing and grows out of our faith-relationship with the Lord Jesus Christ. Let us remember that Christ is the Vine and we are the branches. As we abide in the Vine, His life continues to flow into us and change us. When people sever themselves from the Vine, they soon wither and die. Our life comes from Christ alone. Every branch that does not bear fruit is cut off and thrown into the fire. This is a reference to eternal judgment (cf. Jn.15:5-6).

## **Faith-Relationship is the Only Thing That Changes Men**

5:6 *“For in Jesus Christ neither circumcision availeth any thing, nor uncircumcision; but faith which worketh by love.”* Exterior practices and observances accomplish nothing! The thing we are looking for is a changed nature, a new heart. Being circumcised or uncircumcised does not affect our nature at all. This is not the issue. The thing that *does* change our hearts is faith—a relationship with the Redeemer. And faith operates by love. Faith only functions in a soft heart. Faith cannot work in a proud, hardened heart. Faith cannot work in a self-righteous heart.

Righteousness comes from a relationship with a Person—the Lord Jesus Christ.

- Isa. 54:17 ....“Their righteousness is of me saith the Lord.”
- Col. 2:10 .....“Ye are complete in Him”
- Phil. 3:9 .....“Not having my own righteousness, which is of the law, but that which is through the faith of Christ, the righteousness which is of God by faith.”
- Rom.10:4 ....“Christ is the end [fulfillment, termination] of the law for righteousness to every one who believeth.”
- Lev. 26:13 .. “I the Lord...have broken the bands of your yoke and made you go upright.”
- 1 Cor.1:30 .....Christ is ... “our wisdom, righteousness, holiness, and ransom”

Therefore—“He that glorieth, let him glory in the Lord.”

## **Condemnation of the False Teachers**

5:7-12 *“Ye did run well; who did hinder you that ye should not obey the truth? This persuasion cometh not of him that calleth you. A little leaven leaveneth the whole lump. I have confidence in you through the Lord, that ye will be none otherwise minded: but he that troubleth you shall bear his judgment, whosoever he be. And I, brethren, if I yet preach circumcision, why do I yet suffer persecution? then is the offence of the cross ceased. I would they were even cut off which trouble you.”*

5:7 *“Ye did run well; who did hinder you that ye should not obey the truth?”* The Galatians had made a noble start, but then they listened to the wrong people. This is true of so many Christians. They start off well, only to be deflected from the path later. The Galatians had an excellent spiritual father. By their own choice, they willingly listened to enticing talkers and closed their hearts to Paul. Thus, they veered off course. Remember, our test is coming too! Paul warns all of us to prepare ourselves for the “evil day”. The day of testing will come, and we must gird ourselves in advance with the whole armor of God. (See Ephesians 6:13-18).

## **Enticing, But Deceitful**

5:8 *“This persuasion cometh not of him that calleth you.”* How quickly they had been removed from Him who had called them into the grace of Christ, unto another gospel. The Galatians had started the race well and were heading toward the prize of God's high calling, but someone had thrown obstacles in their pathway. These false teachers were very persuasive. Only hearts that were deeply committed to Christ could have detected the deceit and true motives of the Judaizers. Unfortunately, the commitment level of the believers in Galatia was shallow at best.

“For all seek their own [interests], not the things which are Jesus Christ's”  
Philippians 2:21

## **A Little Can Destroy Much**

5:9 *“A little leaven leaveneth the whole lump.”* Leaven is a symbol of sin, false doctrine, and hypocrisy. (See Mt.16:6,12; Lk.12:1). Leaven is yeast, it spreads and permeates the whole loaf. This is leaven's chief characteristic, but sin and false doctrine are like this too! Just a little will spread quickly through a church and absorb the whole congregation. When immorality was not dealt with promptly in Corinth, it started to spread through the church (cf. 1 Cor. 5:1-7). Again Paul warned, “Know ye not that a little leaven leaveneth the whole lump?” Please notice that it says a “little” leaven. It only takes *a little* to corrupt the whole church. Ecclesiastes 9:18 warns: “One sinner destroyeth much good.” Achan upset a whole congregation (cf. Josh. 7:1,11,12). Ten spies, peers of Joshua, discouraged a whole nation and turned them away from the Land of Promise.

## **Paul Had Hope for the Galatians**

5:10 *“I have confidence in you through the Lord, that ye will be none otherwise minded: but he that troubleth you shall bear his judgment, whosoever he be.”* Paul believed the Galatians could come out of the spell that had been cast upon them by the Judaizers. Confidence for others comes from personal experience. If God has met you in certain areas of your life, then you have faith that God can meet others in those same areas. Paul himself had known great deception in his youth. He had been mixed up with legalism in his former years, but Christ had delivered him on the Damascus road. Paul had God-given confidence that the Galatians could be retrieved from their error, but also he had confidence that those who had misled them would meet God's judgment.

## **The Awesome Responsibility of Being a Teacher**

It is an awesome responsibility to be a teacher, especially in the area of spiritual matters. When a Bible teacher is wrong on a certain point, he will plant that error in the hearts of all his students. Then, his students will go out and reproduce that wrong seed in the hearts of many others. Thus, his error is multiplied many times over. The Apostle James warns against this very thing in James 3:1:

“My brethren, be not many [teachers], knowing that we shall receive the greater condemnation.” (Not many of you should presume to be teachers, my brothers, for you know that we teachers will be judged by a higher standard and with greater severity than other people. Thus, we assume the greater accountability and the more condemnation.)

I have learned over my many years of ministry that people who are *eager* to counsel others almost never have any real substance to give. Generally, they are struggling with a multitude of problems in their own personal lives—the very same problems they are trying to solve for their “clients”. James further exhorts us to “be swift to hear, slow to speak” (Jas.1:19). See Prov.17:27.

The Judaizers were men with a voracious appetite to teach others, while they themselves did not understand their own corrupt hearts or the subjects they were trying to convey. Paul aptly describes them in 1 Timothy 1:7: “Desiring to be teachers of the law; understanding neither what they say, nor whereof they affirm.” They had no understanding of the words and terms they used, or the subjects about which they made such dogmatic assertions. Let us not make the mistake of Job who “multiplied his words without knowledge” (Job 34:35, 35:16, 38:2).

### **The Cross is an Offense—There is no Glory for Me**

5:11 “*And I, brethren, if I yet preach circumcision, why do I yet suffer persecution? then is the offence of the cross ceased.*” The cross is offensive! It is a stumbling stone because it rejects all human merit and glory and looks to the crucified Man of Sorrows for its only hope of righteousness. For preaching this, Paul was being persecuted. Circumcision and observing the Mosaic ordinances was something man could do. But the cross took away all of man's boasting; therefore, the cross was offensive and Paul was hated for his message. Mankind wants to glory *in himself* more than in the Lord, but Paul tells us: “He who glories, let him glory in the Lord” (cf. 1 Cor.1:29-31).

### **Paul Wishes the Judaizers Were Amputated From the Galatian Body**

5:12 “*I would they were even cut off which trouble you.*” Concerning those who were unsettling the Galatian churches, Paul wishes they were “cut off” or amputated from the church. While the false teachers were preaching circumcision (the necessity of cutting off the flesh), Paul goes further and wishes that the trouble makers themselves were cut off from that Galatian body. Christ taught, “If thy hand offend thee, cut it off.” Or if your eye or foot offend you, cut it off; it is better to enter into heaven being dismembered, than to have a complete body to be cast into hell. (See Mark 9:43-48).

It is better to lose an eye than to have that eye used for pornography and adultery, which eventually lead to eternal judgment. It is better to lose a member of our body if it can save us from hell. Sometimes, a member of the body has to be cut off to save the rest of the body. One cancer cell can destroy the whole body. This is true in a body of believers. Sometimes an infectious member needs to be removed or he will destroy the whole body. Such was the case of Achan when he had to be cut off from the congregation (Josh. 7:1,11,12). In a very real sense, this is what Paul is saying in 5:12.

### **Christian Liberty is Not License to Do What We Want**

5:13 “*For, brethren, ye have been called unto liberty; only use not liberty for an occasion to the flesh, but by love serve one another.*” While we are called to be free from unnecessary bondages, we cannot use our liberty to live as we please. For some, Paul's opposition to legalism was used as an excuse to be lawless. Certainly, some of his readers would use the doctrines of grace as a license for sin and self-indulgence. Therefore, Paul found it necessary to warn the Galatians that their Christian liberty must not be used for self, but to *serve* others in the spirit of love.

A person has to be very mature before he can be given full freedom. Liberty is dangerous; it can even destroy us. Without maturity, a person will use his liberty as an opportunity for “the flesh.” This is the reason we are under “tutors and governors” until the time appointed by the Father.

Some seminar teachers have urged young people to stay at home with their parents until they are married. Many who insist on having their *freedom* and living away from home fall into moral sin. *Resenting* being under authority and obeying house rules, they have fallen into the *real* bondages—moral sin, abortion, guilt, regret, bitterness, hatred, drugs, and alcohol.

Long-standing problems in our lives (a physical ailment, pressures, other annoying situations at home or at work) are permitted by God more than we think. God has important reasons for allowing lingering irritations in our lives for a while. They are keeping us on course and forming within us Christian character. God will remove these troubles, one by one, as we mature and as we become able to handle liberty, without liberty being our ruin. God will deal with our enemy or problem as we mature and as issues are adjusted in our lives (Prov.16:7, 2 Cor.10:6).

### **Love—The Fulfillment of the Law**

5:13-14 *“For, brethren, ye have been called unto liberty; only use not liberty for an occasion to the flesh, but by love serve one another. For all the law is fulfilled in one word, even in this; Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself.”* Here is the whole object of the Law—to love our neighbor as ourself. This is called “the royal law” (Jas. 2:8), and also “the golden rule”. Loving our neighbor as ourself is a perfect summarization of the Law (Mt. 7:12). Ironically, a legalist, in seeking to become the greatest keeper of the law, is the greatest violator of the Law because he is unable to love. Instead, he is filled with criticism, pride, hardness, hypocrisy, and self-righteousness. See Mark 7:1-9.

### **Turning From Grace, They Had No Power to Love**

5:15 *“But if ye bite and devour one another, take heed that ye be not consumed one of another.”* The Galatians, in turning from grace, by detaching themselves from the Vine, had no power to forbear or love one another. In taking their eyes off Christ, malice and hatred and bitterness started to rule in their hearts. They were “biting and devouring one another.” The greatest hallmark of holiness is the control of the tongue (Jas. 3:2). Yet, in groups that are centered around do's and don't's you will find a constant outflow of gossip and criticism.

### **Walking in the Spirit—The Only Way to be Holy**

5:16 *“This I say then, Walk in the Spirit, and ye shall not fulfil the lust of the flesh.”* Faith is our lifeline to God. Through faith, we walk with God, talk with God, and continuously receive His strength. When believers turn from faith and the Spirit-filled life unto rules and traditions, they have no power to withstand the lusts of the flesh. While an Amish person carefully guards all of his traditions, dress codes, and separation from the world, still he has no power over incest. Incest is a major problem in that culture. An Amish or anyone else who majors in external rules more than Christ cannot have the mastery over his carnal appetites. It is only by a walk of faith and a union with Christ and His Spirit that a man has power over the temptations of the flesh.

### **The Continual Battle**

5:17 *“For the flesh lusteth against the Spirit, and the Spirit against the flesh: and these are contrary the one to the other: so that ye [may] not do the things that ye would.”* Our battle with the flesh is continuous and full of peril. Old appetites and evil tendencies must be kept nailed to the cross daily. The more spiritual a man is, the more sensitive he is to the struggle between the flesh and the Spirit, and the more he realizes that there are abiding forces in the human heart that are in mutual antagonism, “for these are contrary the one to the other.”

The flesh strives against the control of the Spirit, and the Spirit strives against the control of the flesh, “that ye may not do the things that ye would.” Paul did not say as the KJV reads, “Ye *cannot* do the things that ye would”, but “ye *may not* do the things that ye would.” There is a choice to be made daily, by grace, and it will result either in victory or defeat.

### **A Life in the Spirit Frees Us From the Law**

5:18 “*But if ye be led of the Spirit, ye are not under the law.*” If we are yielded to the Spirit, and if we are under the control of the Spirit, then the Spirit will contend against the flesh and win the battle. The Spirit will help us fulfill the righteous demands of the Law. Therefore, we are free from the curse of the Law. We are not under the Law, we are under Grace, which comes from a walk of faith.

The flesh (the corrupt and carnal part of us) strives and struggles against the spirit (the renewed part of us) and against the Holy Spirit. We are in a definite battle because we have two natures. We have a new man, and an old man. Even as the house of David grew stronger and stronger and the house of Saul grew weaker and weaker, the new man must become stronger than the old man (2 Sam.3:1). Every believer is assured this victory if he will walk in Christ's Spirit and live in His Spirit. This means saying *no* to the flesh (by divine grace), and *yes* to the things of righteousness.

In 5:19-21, there are seventeen manifestations of the flesh which must be mortified or put to death. In case we think Paul is teaching that we are free from all moral law to do as we please, the following teaches quite the opposite. By the following iniquities, men and women can disqualify themselves from everlasting life. “They that practice such things shall not inherit the kingdom of God.”

### **The Works of the Flesh**

5:19-21 “*Now the works of the flesh are manifest, which are these; Adultery, fornication, uncleanness, lasciviousness, Idolatry, witchcraft, hatred, variance, emulations, wrath, strife, seditions, heresies, Envyings, murders, drunkenness, revellings, and such like: of the which I tell you before, as I have also told you in time past, that they which do such things shall not inherit the kingdom of God.*” See also Ephesians 5:3-7, 1 Cor. 6:9-10

Any of these works of the flesh, if continued in and not repented of, could cause a man to lose his soul. In Romans 8:35-39, Paul lists seventeen things that cannot separate us from the love of Christ, but here he lists seventeen things that can. Nothing can separate us from God's love—except our sins. “But your iniquities have separated between you and your God, and your sins have hid his face from you, that he will not hear.” (Isa. 59:2).

These “works” of the flesh are “manifest”. This is to say they are easily seen and recognized. There is no difficulty in distinguishing between those who “walk in the Spirit” and those who “fulfill the lusts of the flesh.” The propensities toward all these sins can lie dormant in our hearts. We are capable of falling into any of these. Unless we walk in the Spirit and thus restrain the flesh, any of these hideous vices can bud and blossom. Therefore, Paul adds the solemn warning which he repeats time and time again—“They that practice such things shall not inherit the kingdom of God.”

In turning from a life in the Spirit, the Galatians were endangering themselves, leaving their souls open to the temptation of all these works of the flesh. Undoubtedly, these sins were common in Galatia (even as they are all around the world today), and many of the Galatians would return to their former lifestyles, unless there was a drastic turnaround.

## The Works of the Flesh

*Adultery, fornication, uncleanness, lasciviousness, Idolatry, witchcraft, hatred, variance, emulations, wrath, strife, seditions, heresies, Envyings, murders, drunkenness, and revellings, and such like:* This group of seventeen fleshly vices is fairly comprehensive. Yet the fact that Paul ends with “and such like” shows that the list is by no means exhaustive. All of these sins have one thing in common—they are all rooted in selfishness. Love is exactly the opposite—love is totally unselfish.

Perhaps we could divide these seventeen into *three* classes:

- 1.) Self-centered moral life—adultery, fornication, uncleanness, lasciviousness
- 2.) Self-centered spiritual life—idolatry, witchcraft
- 3.) Self-centered social strife—hatred, variance, emulations, wrath, strife, seditions, heresies, envies, murders, drunkenness, revellings.

**Adultery** - (infidelity to one's spouse) This sin is associated with many other evil spirits getting into the heart such as deceit, lying, cover-ups, hypocrisy, and down right betrayal. See Hosea 4:11

**Fornication** - (involves *all* illicit sexual relations) Impurity destroys the conscience (Eph. 4:17-19).

**Uncleanness** - not only sexual irregularities, but everything that leads to them, such as the filthiness of pornography and other vile stimuli

**Lasciviousness** - shamelessness, insolent disregard for decency, brazen boldness of evil lifestyles

**Idolatry** - false religions, false worship, love and devotion to something other than the true God

**Witchcraft** - (sorcery, magic) often associated with drugs and secret tampering with evil powers

**Hatred** - (enmity; hostility to others) Rooted in a hardened heart, it is opposite of love. Consider Cain.

**Variance** - (strife); an evil, noisy, disputing, contentious temper, like Nabal - (1 Sam. 25:3,17)

**Emulations** - (jealousy, rivalry for a position) as seen in Absalom or Korah. A need to be number one

**Wrath** - outbursts of anger which can become demonic (Jas.1:20)

**Strife** - (factions) When individuals clash, others take sides. Bribery or flattery is used to win followers.

**Seditions** - (divisions, parties). A willingness to disrupt the peace of a home, a church, or a whole community, and make whole groups stand apart from each other.

**Heresies** - doctrines, false beliefs created by men who claim a revelation no one else ever had before

**Envies** - grief at a neighbor's good fortune; the desire to deprive another of his place and possessions

**Murder** - (the climax of all antagonisms) Saul desired the death of David; the Judaizers would have loved to see Paul die. Cain slew Abel because Abel's works were better than his (1 Jn. 3:12).

**Drunkenness** - (excessive indulgence in strong drink.) Many evil spirits can enter a drunken person.

**Revellings** - corporate indulgence of drunkenness wherein every evil thing is unrestrained (Hos. 4:11)

## The Fruits of the Spirit

5:22-23 - “But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, longsuffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, Meekness, temperance: against such there is no law.” This is what the Holy Spirit produces in the lives of those who live in the Spirit and walk in the Spirit—in those who abide in the Vine. These beautiful fruits display unselfishness, spiritual strength, and the very nature of the Lord.

### All Nine Fruits Are Strengths

**Love** - is the *strength* to put others first, and the *strength* to be unselfish, to bear and endure all things.

**Joy** - “God's joy is our *strength*.” Joy cleanses and heals our spirit of hurts, grudges, and depression.

**Peace** - is the *strength* to be calm in the storms. It is not shaken with doubts and fears of the enemy.

**Longsuffering** - is the *strength* not to “give up” but to endure difficulties and hard circumstances.

**Gentleness** - is the *strength* not to be rough or abrasive with others. It is an outgrowth of wisdom.

**Goodness** - is the *strength* to do what is morally right. It considers what is *eternally best* for another.

**Faith** - is the *strength* to overcome the world, Satan, and dark trials (1 Jn. 5:4).

**Meekness** - is the *strength* not to retaliate, verbally or physically (Isa. 53:7, 1 Pet. 2:21-23).

**Temperance** - is the *strength* not to indulge, the *strength* to restrain appetites and passions.

Christian maturity is measured by one standard—“By their fruits you shall know them” (Mt. 7:20). We measure a man's character, not by his gifts, but by evidence of the fruit of the Spirit in his life. Were the Judaizers ruled by these fruits? Did their teachings produce these fruits? Certainly not! They were drawing men to themselves, not to Christ (cf. Acts 20:30). The Judaizers did not have the love of God, or joy, or goodness. They had an insatiable appetite to control others and to promote their own cause, irrespective of the damage it caused. Did they care about the eternal welfare of men and women? Certainly not! Their motivation was jealousy and envy, and they would slander and defame Paul and wish for his death in order to have dominion over the people.

### All Nine Fruits Reveal God's Nature

**Love** - God *is* love. 1 John 4:16

**Joy** - The joy of the Lord *is* our strength. Nehemiah 8:10

**Peace** - He *is* the Prince of Peace. Isaiah 9:6

**Longsuffering** - The Lord *is* longsuffering, merciful, gracious. Exodus 34:6.

**Gentleness** - “*Thy* gentleness has made me great.” Psalm 18:35

**Goodness** - He is “abundant in goodness and truth” Exodus 34:6, Psalm 34:8

**Faith** - “I live by [his faith] the faith of the Son of God” Galatians 2:20, Acts 3:16

**Meekness** - “I am meek and lowly in heart.” Matthew 11:29

**Self-control** - “Therefore will the Lord wait, that he may be gracious unto thee” Isa. 30:18, 42:14

All nine fruits of the Spirit reveal the nature of God. He is the very essence of these fruits. Thus, when all of these fruits are abounding within us, we will be very much like the Lord. This is our calling and goal (Rom. 8:29, 1 Jn. 3:2). “Against such, there is no law.” There is no higher law than this. Surely there is no law against the exercise of such virtues. They are, in fact, the truest fulfillment of the Law.

## **The Choice to be Holy**

5:24 “*And they that are Christ’s have crucified the flesh with the affections and lusts.*” Holiness is a battle, and a daily choice. Grace enables us to say “no” to the works of the flesh, but the choice is ours. Joseph fled from temptation, but Samson stayed around and fell. One was wise, one was not.

The walk of holiness is not an option and it is not easy, but it is possible by grace. Every one of us is in need of a new heart. Yet this new heart comes gradually as we obey God (and those He has put over us), and as we walk in the Spirit daily. The *new man* will grow stronger and stronger as we obey God, and the *old man* will grow weaker and weaker (cf. 2 Samuel 3:1).

It is God who is working within us to will and do His good pleasure (Phil. 2:13). God is changing our will and giving us new desires. Proverbs 23:26 says: “My son, give me thine heart.” If there is a temptation or struggle that is overpowering you, go to Him today and say: “Lord, I am placing my heart in your hands. Please change my desires.” The power of sin is usually in one's *love* for it, but God is able to make us abhor that particular habit or evil desire, if we permit Him to do so.

Our cooperation with God is important! We must never resist His Spirit. God is very patient with people, but if they continue to resent correction or complain about their circumstances long enough, He will leave them alone. He will allow them to go their own way, but they will end up in obscurity.

### **Living and Walking in the Spirit Means Pressing Toward a Mark**

5:25 “*If we live in the Spirit, let us also walk in the Spirit.*” “If we live by the Spirit, by the Spirit let us also walk.” The Greek word used here for “walk” is not quite the same as the one used in 5:16. In verse 16, *walk* describes the usual daily life, but here it pictures the activity of one who is making progress on a journey or is pressing toward a goal. We must have a mark to press toward and that mark is to advance toward becoming like Christ and having a better resurrection (Phil. 3:11-14).

We must realize that eternal rewards can be lost and that a crown can be forfeited (Rev. 3:11). Without a vision, people dwell carelessly and cast off all restraint (Prov. 29:18). Many Christians think it does not matter if they win or lose the battle with the flesh, but this can be a matter of life and death. When a believer realizes how much is at stake, that realization gives him great incentive to live an overcoming life. Hebrews 4:1 promotes godly fear. This passage tells us to be afraid of coming short of God's mark for our lives.

### **The Problem of Exalting Self**

5:26 “*Let us not be desirous of vain glory, provoking one another, envying one another.*” Paul closes with a reference to the sins which especially troubled his readers. It is the problem of self-exaltation and self-glorification which only stirs up strife in others. Even the twelve apostles were guilty of provoking one another around the communion table at the last supper (Lk. 22:24).

As a cure for envy, Paul exhorts men to “esteem others better than themselves” in Philippians 2:3. Humility is one of the greatest keys for having unity and receiving God's blessing (Psa.133). In chapter six, Paul continues his theme of humility and meekness by asking the saints to consider their own weaknesses first before judging others. On the next page, we will review the highlights of chapter five.

## Summary of Chapter Five

5:1 - Paul urges the Galatians to “stand fast” in their Christian liberty and not to fall back into the bondage of the Judaizers. God makes us free, but we have our responsibility to stay free (Isa. 52:2).

5:2-4 If the Galatians relied on circumcision as a means of salvation, this would be a renunciation of the means of justification God had provided. This would be challenging the sufficiency of Christ's redeeming work. This is “falling from grace.”

5:5 Our only hope of being righteous comes “through the Spirit.” Only by abiding in the Vine do we have life and divine righteousness flowing into us. All of this is by faith, not rituals.

5:6 Circumcised or uncircumcised is not the issue. These do not change our heart or our nature. The only thing that changes us is “faith which works by love”. It is only by a relationship of faith.

5:7-8 The Galatians had started the race and moved toward the prize. Then they were hindered by persuasive talkers. They willingly listened to the wrong people and closed their ears to Paul.

5:9 It only took “a little leaven” to corrupt the whole church. Just a few evil men infected all the churches of Galatia. Leaven is a symbol of sin and false doctrine. It spreads quickly.

5:10 Yet, Paul had confidence “through the Lord” that the Galatians could be put back on the right path. Also, he was confident that those who had troubled them would meet God's judgment.

5:11 Circumcision and keeping ordinances is something man can do. Therefore, man can glory in the fact that he has made himself righteous and earned his way. But the cross is an “offense” because it takes away all boasting. Therefore, Paul “suffered persecution” for his message.

5:12 Paul wishes the Judaizers were “cut off” or amputated from the Galatian body.

5:13 Christian liberty is not to be used “for the flesh.” Paul warns them not to use the grace message as a license for self-indulgence. We are set free to serve God, not ourselves. See Exodus 4:23.

5:14 “Love is the fulfilling of the Law.” A legalist, in trying to be the greatest keeper of the Law, becomes its greatest violator because he cannot love. He is critical, hard, and self-righteous.

5:15 Turning from grace, they “devoured one another.” They had no power to love or forbear.

5:16-17 Walking in the Spirit is the only way to avoid fulfilling the lusts of the flesh. We are in a continual battle—the flesh against the Spirit, and the Spirit against the flesh.

5:18 Being led by the Spirit and yielded to the Spirit, we fulfill the law, and are not under its curse.

5:19-21 Here are seventeen “works of the flesh” that can destroy our soul. Thus, we are not free from moral law to do as we please. *Selfishness* sums up the works of the flesh.

5:22-23 The nine fruits of the Spirit display the very nature of the Lord. Against these, there is no higher law. They are, in actual fact, the truest fulfillment of the Law.

5:24 True Christians must “crucify the flesh with its affections and lusts.” It is *a choice*, by grace.

5:25 If we live by the Spirit, then by the Spirit let us walk. *Walk* signifies marching toward a goal.

5:26 Being warned against *vainglory* (self-exaltation) we should esteem others better than ourselves.

# Chapter Six

Since love is the fulfilling of the Law, Paul applies the law of love to the issue of “bearing one another's burdens.” He does so in two major areas of life:

First, in the burden of moral fault—in restoring a fallen brother (v1-5) and

Second, in the burden of temporal needs—in supporting God-appointed leaders (v6-10).

6:1-5 *“Brethren, if a man be overtaken in a fault, ye which are spiritual, restore such an one in the spirit of meekness; considering thyself, lest thou also be tempted. Bear ye one another’s burdens, and so fulfil the law of Christ. For if a man think himself to be something, when he is nothing, he deceiveth himself. But let every man prove his own work, and then shall he have rejoicing in himself alone, and not in another. For every man shall bear his own burden.”*

## The Right Attitude Toward a Fallen Brother

6:1 *“Brethren, if a man be overtaken in a fault, ye which are spiritual, restore such an one in the spirit of meekness; considering thyself, lest thou also be tempted.”* If a brother falls into sin, the first responsibility of the Church is to seek his restoration and good. This is the law of love. Attitudes should be humble, realizing that we, too, are capable of falling into the same sins. When harshness is shown to a fallen brother, it will invite many unnecessary tests to see how we measure up. For example, when Peter boasted, “Though all men forsake you, I will never,” he implied that he was better and stronger than his brethren. Thus he opened himself to temptation and he fell. Someone who is spiritual is sensitive to the temptations and torments of others, and he is ever conscious and thankful for the grace that has kept him. Also, he has no criticism of those who have fallen.

6:2 *“Bear ye one another’s burdens, and so fulfil the law of Christ.”* The “law of Christ” is the command to love one another (cf. Gal. 5:14, Rom.13:8-10, Jn.13:34, Mt. 7:12). Christ came to heal the broken hearted, preach deliverance to the captives, and set at liberty them that are bruised (Lk. 4:18). Loving people means we have to “bear” their burdens and shoulder pressures which are too heavy for them (Rom.15:1-3). Temptation itself is a burden. A brother or sister who is bowed beneath the burden of temptation needs the support and understanding of others (Heb. 2:18). Job was a man who had a special ministry of upholding others who were ready to fall (cf. Job 4:3-4).

## The Right Attitude Toward Ourselves

6:3 *“For if a man think himself to be something, when he is nothing, he deceiveth himself.”* Here is the main reason a man cannot show sympathy to a struggling or fallen brother. It is the attitude of Luke 18:11: “Lord, I thank thee that I am not as other men are.” While looking down upon a fallen brother, a conceited man congratulates himself for not falling. In thinking that his spirituality far exceeds that of others, he only deceives himself, for grace is the only thing that makes anyone different (1 Cor.15:10), and it is only by grace that we *continue* to stand. Paul warns that we should be more concerned about our own weaknesses than those of others, or we will be tempted and fall.

6:4 *“But let every man prove his own work, and then shall he have rejoicing in himself alone, and not in another.”* Instead of comparing oneself with others, Paul urges each man to examine his own works in God's light. In doing so, he probably will find very little reason for which he may praise himself. If his works do indeed stand the test of God's scrutiny, he may then have satisfaction and rejoicing between himself and God alone.

6:5 *“For every man shall bear his own burden.”* Our first responsibility is to guard our own hearts. On Judgment day we answer to God for our own faults, not those of our neighbor. We must bear our “own” burden. Also we will give an account for the way we have treated others. Did we “bear one another’s burdens” or did we make matters worse by criticizing them for their undesirable defects?

In 6:1, Paul said that we should “bear one another’s burdens” but here he declares “each man must bear his own burden.” When a Christian realizes how far short of perfection he has fallen, he will be more ready, in a spirit of gentleness, to bear his brother’s burden of fault and weakness, and thus fulfill the law of Christ. Remember, if we desire mercy, we must show mercy (Mt.7:12, 7:7).

### **The Laws of Sowing and Reaping**

6:6-10 *“Let him that is taught in the word communicate [or give] unto him that teacheth in all good things. Be not deceived; God is not mocked: for whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap. For he that soweth to his flesh shall of the flesh reap corruption; but he that soweth to the Spirit shall of the Spirit reap life everlasting. And let us not be weary in well doing: for in due season we shall reap, if we faint not. As we have therefore opportunity, let us do good unto all men, especially unto them who are of the household of faith.”*

### **Supporting Your Minister is Sowing to the Spirit**

6:6 *“Let him that is taught in the word [give] unto him that teacheth in all good things.”* (Let him who is receiving instruction in the Word give to his teacher a share of all the good things which he possesses.) This verse suggests that the Galatian churches had neglected their leaders in the area of financial support. Paul taught the Christian community to support their God-appointed leaders by voluntary gifts.

Ministers are to give attendance to reading, to exhortation, to doctrine (1 Tim. 4:13); they are not to entangle themselves with the affairs of this life (2 Tim. 2:4), and therefore it is fit and equitable that, while they sow to others spiritual things, they should reap their [temporal] things. God himself ordained this; for under the Law, those who ministered the holy things lived from the offerings of the temple, so has the Lord ordained that those who preach the Gospel should live of the Gospel (1 Cor. 9:11,13,14). See also 2 Cor. 9:6.

In Galatians 6:6-10, Paul again uses the same figure of “sowing and reaping.” He implies that selfish and unsympathetic dealings with God’s ministers can only result in a harvest of spiritual poverty. On the other hand, generous support of God’s leaders will result in spiritual growth and prosperity. As to this truth, the Galatians should not deceive themselves.

### **Everything We Do is “Sowing”—Either to the Flesh or to the Spirit**

6:7 *“Be not deceived; God is not mocked: for whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap.”* Man can never escape the consequences of his acts, though he often deceives himself by thinking that he can. Those who excuse themselves from fulfilling their moral obligations and from doing God’s will for their lives shall *not* enjoy the rewards in the hereafter. Our brief time here on earth is “sowing time.” If we sow sparingly, we shall reap sparingly. Certainly “sowing and reaping” involves every area of our lives, not just the area of giving or supporting our leaders.

## **“Whatever a man sows, that shall he also reap. Do not be deceived”**

- People think they will escape the consequences of adultery because they have been able to conceal it. They may even think God is making *exceptions* for their situation.
- Others feel that if their wrongdoings are simply forgotten or regarded as a thing of the past there will be no harvest of suffering or pain from the seeds they have sown.
- Some believe that giving more to the church will excuse their sin, or that confession of their iniquities to a priest or minister will free them of consequences.
- Others suppose that merely asking forgiveness of God will cause the law of sowing and reaping to be nullified. It is simply not so. Achan confessed, but had consequences.

Forgiveness for sin is one thing, but still there are consequences that follow. This is not often understood or taught in the Church today. Forgiveness does not prevent a man from reaping a harvest of punishment for his past. However, it *does* secure this supremely important thing—the removal of guilt which separates a man from God. Forgiveness brings a person into fellowship with the loving Father whose heart has been deeply hurt and offended.

But forgiveness also enables one to bear more patiently the punishment for the fruit of his sin. God uses the consequence itself to serve as “a reminder”; it prevents the offender from sowing further seeds which would result in a greater harvest of sorrow. We must not be deceived or ignorant of this fact—“*Whatever* a man soweth, that shall he also reap.” Consequences for sin cannot be averted. “He that soweth to his flesh shall of the flesh reap corruption.”

A father wanted to impress this truth upon the mind of his son, so he asked his son to pound a nail in the door every time he disobeyed. When the son repented and asked forgiveness, the father told him to pull the nails out of the door. After pulling the nails out, he said, “Dad, but the nail holes are still there.” “Yes”, his father said; “these are *reminders* for you not to disobey again. These represent the *scars* you have left behind, even though you have been forgiven.”

### **Sowing to the Flesh**

6:8 “*For he that soweth to his flesh shall of the flesh reap corruption; but he that soweth to the Spirit shall of the Spirit reap life everlasting.*” We are constantly “sowing”—either good or bad seeds. By our words, thoughts, attitudes, decisions, and actions, we are sowing. And everything we sow, we are going to reap. It always comes back to us, but in greater measure than we sowed. Parents who leave a church in anger and in criticism are planting those same things in the hearts of their children. The children will richly repay them later with plenty of defiance and rebellion. One's attitudes toward authority are very much reflected in their children.

Genesis clearly teaches us that everything (animal / vegetable / man) brings forth “after his kind.” This is an unchanging law of creation (Gen.1:11,12, 21, 24, 25; 5:3). Cows produce cows, potatoes produce potatoes, short parents produce short children, obstinate parents produce obstinate children. Parents who never go to church produce children who have no respect for God's house. Mothers who disrespect their husbands produce daughters who disrespect their husbands. Fathers who love pornography and a clandestine lifestyle, produce the same in their sons and daughters. What are you planting in your children? Remember—you will harvest *more* than you sowed.

## Sowing to the Spirit

“*But he that soweth to the Spirit shall of the Spirit reap life everlasting.*” Let us plant good things continually, and reap the rewards. There are many ways to “sow to the Spirit.” Being honorable during courtship is an excellent example of “sowing to the Spirit.” This is building our life and home and eternity on a good foundation (Mt. 7:24,25). It is laying a good foundation for future children too. Being morally pure before marriage is planting seeds of trust and a good conscience. When a teenage girl accepts clandestine phone calls at 3:00 a.m. every morning from a boy friend, she is “sowing to the flesh” and she is going to reap corruption. She is filling her life with the seeds of sorrow and the seeds that make an unhappy home.

Sowing to the Spirit is:

- Being discreet and honorable during courtship
- Doing everything *in the light*, not after a clandestine manner
- Being transparent and open, not a private person (Jn. 3:20-21)
- Speaking kind words, and having a forgiving spirit
- Being gracious, even to undesirable people
- Meditating in the Word, assimilating God's wisdom continually
- Purposely removing ourselves from vulnerable situations
- Constantly doing what is right, irrespective of the consequences
- Thinking right thoughts (throwing away wrong books and evil pictures)
- Watching wholesome TV programs—turning off adulterous soap operas
- Listening to anointed worship / praise, not worldly music which draws one back into the world
- Praying for pure motives and self-knowledge, and for grace to be kept from evil
- Making good decisions at every juncture of our walk with God
- Seeking counsel and direction from the godly, not the ungodly.
- Maintaining a thankful and rejoicing spirit—which lead to faith
- Being with the right people, not like Dinah (Gen. 34:1) who had worldly girl friends
- Being in the right places—Ruth, being in the *right* place, found the *right* husband
- Disconnecting from the chat-rooms on the internet—What are you looking for anyway?
- Having respect for authority—parents, teachers, law officers, pastors, husband
- Having financial integrity—with poor management of money, you will reap great bondage
- Possessing an eternal vision, and pressing toward that continually
- Saying *no* to the flesh. As we do these things, we are sowing to the Spirit

### Before the Evil Years of Reaping Come

“Remember now thy Creator in the days of thy youth, while the evil days come not, nor the years draw nigh, when thou shalt say, I have no pleasure in them.” (Ecc.12:1). King Solomon was an extremely unhappy man. He was very depressed and negative about life as he preached this sermon called Ecclesiastes. It was a time of *reaping* for him when he was around 58 years of age. Statistics tell us that most people who are sixty-five or older are not happy! The reason—these are the years of reaping. Most of our sowing is in the days of our youth—how we behaved during courtship, whether we were obedient to God in those crucial years when the most important decisions of our lives had to be made. Solomon sowed many wild seeds when he was young (Ecc. 2:10; 11:9-10), and now in his older years he looked at the dismal harvest. His heart was unbelieving and hard and in a terrible state. Let us “Remember our creator in the days of our youth.” Let us be more conscious that every decision we make is *sowing* our future, our destiny. May everything we do be done out of reverence for God, and then it will bear good fruit.

## **“If We Faint Not”**

6:9 “*And let us not be weary in well doing: for in due season we shall reap, if we faint not.*” Long delays have always been a problem for man, especially when something unpleasant is prolonged. Many people give up when the pressures increase and the time drags on. But we cannot give up or grow lax in the struggle against the flesh; and we cannot grow weary in well doing because the stakes are too high and there are many rewards to reap. The “greatest harvest” is at the resurrection when we receive our eternal inheritance and our eternal bodies. Unfortunately, some people do not continue in the faith but return to the world and lose *everything*. These have grown weary of saying *yes* to grace, and they just throw everything to the wind. We must never do this! (Mt. 24:13).

There are other rewards to reap *if we faint not*. When we get to heaven, what will we have? What kind of mansion will we have? How close will we be to Christ? Will we have a crown, or will it be forfeited and given to someone else?

Here are some eternal rewards we reap “if we faint not:”

- A better resurrection - (Heb.11:35, 1 Cor.15:41,42, Phil. 3:11,14, Rev. 20:5,6)
- A position close to Christ - Some are on Zion's mountain; others are on a lower plane (Rev.14:1-5).
- A better mansion - It is built by our works down here (Mt. 6:19-20).
- A throne - is given to overcomers (Rev. 2:26, 3:21, 20:4).
- A crown - symbolic of victories we gain, and for faithfulness (Rev. 3:11, 4:10)
- A people (our inheritance) - These are part of our reward (1 Thes. 2:19, Phil. 4:1, Psa. 2:8).

Of course, there are many good things that we reap during this life as well, but often we have to wait a long time to receive earthly promises. Paul tells us that we need patience, that “after we have done the will of God we receive the promise” (cf. Heb.10:36). Sometimes it requires years of waiting before we reap what we have sown. Such was the case with Jonathan Chapman, better known as Johnny Appleseed. For almost fifty years, he walked through western Pennsylvania, Ohio, and Indiana. Everywhere he went he carried bags of apple seeds and planted them. Thousands of settlers traveling westward were blessed by the seeds he had planted many years earlier (Psa.126:5,6).

Paul says we will reap if we *stand the test of time* and do not faint. Continue to say *yes* to grace in your times of discouragement (Heb. 4:16). Grace is offered in times of need. When people give up and turn back, they have said *no* to grace. They have actually resisted and refused grace!

## **Bear the Burdens of All Men**

6:10 “*As we have therefore opportunity, let us do good unto all men, especially unto them who are of the household of faith.*” Coming back to Paul's theme, the Apostle in verses 1-10 has exhorted the Galatians to bear one another's burdens. He asks them to bear with the faults of others, and also to bear the burden of caring for the leaders of the church. He urges them to sow abundantly; and in doing so, they will reap bountifully. He applies the law of sowing and reaping to *all* aspects of life. Sowing to the flesh, a man reaps corruption, but sowing to the Spirit, we reap life everlasting.

In conclusion, Paul asks the Christian community to “do good unto all men, especially unto them who are of the household of faith.” There are some duties which we owe specifically to our fellow Christian family and to those who hold offices of spiritual oversight, but certainly we are not limited to any one circle. Our kindness and graciousness should extend as widely as our influence. In *all* our dealings with others, we should demonstrate the divine law of love.

## **Paul Writes the Epistle With His Own Handwriting**

6:11 “*Ye see how large a letter [or in what large letters] I have written unto you with mine own hand.*” Most of Paul’s epistles were written by scribes as Paul dictated to them. He simply added his signature at the end (Rom.16:22, 1 Cor.16:21, Col. 4:18, 2 Thes. 3:17, cf. 1 Pet. 5:12). In this case, Paul may have written the entire epistle with his own hand, or at least the closing paragraph. Either way, “large letters” or large handwriting was used, an indication of his highly emotional state, and perhaps poor eye sight. Paul now writes a conclusion that reemphasizes his main themes.

## **The Judaizers Glory in the Flesh**

6:12 “*As many as desire to make a fair shew in the flesh, they constrain you to be circumcised; only lest they should suffer persecution for the cross of Christ.*” Verses 12-13 underscore the deep insincerity of the Judaizing agitators. Their motive was not to glorify God but to “make a fair show in the flesh.” Making a fair show in the flesh means a public displaying or parading of religious works before men. It was a life of *exteriors*, something men could see. The Judaizers wanted the approval and acceptance of the Jewish nation by maintaining all the rituals of Moses. To bypass circumcision and the Law of Moses and to put one’s complete trust in the cross of Christ alone for redemption brought tremendous animosity and persecution from their Jewish peers.

6:13 “*For neither they themselves who are circumcised keep the law; but desire to have you circumcised, that they may glory in your flesh.*” The Judaizers, who promoted the Law, did not keep the Law. They were, in fact, the greatest violators of the Law because they were unable to love. Yet they wanted to maintain their *statistics*—“We have had 400 circumcisions this year, an increase of 120 over the previous year. Let us congratulate ourselves for a job well done.” Paul described such motives, saying: “They desire to have you circumcised, that they may glory in your flesh.”

## **Paul Glories Only in the Cross**

6:14 “*But God forbid that I should glory, save in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, by whom the world is crucified unto me, and I unto the world.*” By using the word “our”, Paul seeks to persuade the Galatians to glory in Christ’s cross as he does. While the cross was an offense to the Judaizers, the cross was Paul’s only glory. His confidence was in Christ’s redemption and nothing else. By the cross, the world’s power to draw him back, and his carnal love for the world, had both been put to death.

## **The Only Thing God Wants—A New Creature**

6:15-16 “*For in Christ Jesus neither circumcision availeth any thing, nor uncircumcision, but a new creature. And as many as walk according to this rule, peace be on them, and mercy, and upon the Israel of God.*” Being circumcised or not being circumcised is not the issue. These are exteriors and they do nothing to change the heart. The whole purpose of the new covenant is to give us a new heart. God wants all hardness, hatred, and resistance out of our lives. He wants us to love Him out of a pure heart, and to love our neighbor as ourselves. This is the ultimate goal of Christianity. Love out of a pure heart is the fulfilling of the Law (Mt. 7:12, 1 Tim.1:5, Gal. 5:14, Rom.13:8-10).

“*As many*” (contrasted with the *as many* of v12) “who walk according to this [standard], peace be on them”. The Judaizers of verse 12 desired to make a fair show in the flesh by relying on circumcision to justify them. But Paul compares this with another standard—justification by faith alone. Those who walk according to this standard will have peace, mercy, and God’s blessing upon them.

*“And upon the Israel of God”*. The “Israel of God” is another name for the Church which is made up of all those who are of faith, whether they are Jews or Gentiles. All others who try to come to God their own way do not have peace or mercy or God's blessing. (See Romans 9:31-33, 10:1-4.) God will only accept those who come to Him by the means *He* has provided—by the Lord Jesus Christ who paid our debt.

### **The Key to Perfection—Not by Self-induced Crosses**

The way to Christian perfection is by walking in the Spirit, living in the Spirit, and having the fruit of the Spirit developed within us. The way God will lead and guide you will be different than the way He leads someone else. Every one of us is uniquely different, and each one of us has different needs. In the kingdom of God, there are no master keys. The key that opens your prison door may not be the key that opens the prison door of your brother or sister. There is no rule book that perfectly applies to every situation. God studies each and every one of us. He understands exactly what we need, and how much pressure we can endure. God has *a specially designed cross* for you and me. If we accept it, God will use it to change our life and make us into a great and noble person. If we refuse that specially tailored cross, we will not be conformed to the image of Christ. Crosses that are self-induced produce nothing good. Legalism and self-induced denials or punishments cannot ever change our nature. In fact, as we have said repeatedly, they only make us worse.

Meekness is the ability to accept our circumstances without anger. When Job lost everything he had in one day, he fell down and worshipped (Job 1:20-22). This was a marvellous demonstration of meekness. In all this Job did not sin with his lips or charge God foolishly. Later in his trial, his testimony deteriorated and his anger revealed the need for a greater amount of meekness.

Your special cross may be a physical ailment, or it may be a very difficult domestic situation with someone in your family. You may have financial stresses that are out of your control. This is what the Book of Job is all about. You may be obedient, yet “walking in darkness and having no light” (Isa. 50:10-11). What should you do? Just hold steady! Very few people have character today. Character is only proven when we are in difficulties which often go on for a long time. So many want to get out of their unpleasant circumstances, but in so doing, they are rejecting that specially designed cross, and they are seriously jeopardizing their possibilities of being conformed to the image of Christ. Remember, if you complain long enough, God will let you go your own way.

### **The Personal Cost of Loving the Truth**

6:17 *“From henceforth let no man trouble me: for I bear in my body the marks of the Lord Jesus.”* Paul had paid a price for the truths he held so dear. Here he asserts his authority as an apostle. “Don't you Judaizers bother me any more about my right to speak. I bear the true marks of apostleship. I have the proof of God working through me. I bear the marks of stripes and stones upon my body because of my service to God.” What a contrast to the Judaizers who were afraid of persecution from their peers, and who lived for the praise of man (cf. 6:12).

### **Paul's Love for the Galatians**

6:18 *“Brethren, the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with your spirit. Amen.”* After all the sorrow and anxiety the Galatians had cost him, Paul ends his epistle with “Brethren”. Of all the benedictions at the end of Paul's epistles, only this one has this special term of endearment. He had confidence in them *through the Lord* that they would cling to “grace” and lay hold of eternal life.

*Many thanks to the following  
for their input and resources:*

- Dr. Brian J. Bailey -  
From his many lectures and counsel
- Matthew Henry -  
*Matthew Henry's Commentary*
- Conybeare and Howson  
*Life and Epistles of St. Paul, 1840's*
- Numerous reference books, word studies.  
*Short excerpts and seed thoughts*
- Mary Humphreys - for her editing expertise.

# Closing Comments

## The Problem of Tradition

Tradition is a hindrance for many! By nature we resist change and anything that challenges our routine. We are creatures of habit, and most individuals would like to keep it that way! People find *security* in the old ways, even if the old ways are wrong or outdated. To have one's life style intruded upon is very difficult for some, and when it is upset, it is met with indignation.

These obstinate mind-sets and traditions are an *obstruction* to the work of the Holy Spirit! *Inflexibility* is a major reason people find no favor with God. The Lord has little pleasure in those who refuse to cooperate with Him. On the other hand, a spiritual man is accommodating, and he is open for change when God requires it. God delights in this kind of man.

## Many Jewish Believers Tried to Live Under Both Covenants

When Christ came with a new message, most of the Israelites rejected it. Even those Jews who *did* accept the new covenant continued to *cling* to the old covenant as well. Christ gave two parables that depicted the inability of many to flow with the new emphasis of the Spirit. First He declared the parable of The Old Garment - (Mt. 9:16-17, Mk. 2:21-22, Lk. 5:36-39).

An old garment that has a tear cannot be patched with a new piece of material. The old garment, in this case, represented the old covenant with all of its tears, infractions, and breaches. When the new covenant came, the Christian Jews wanted to keep the old and patch it with the new, but Christ said in His parable that this would never work. Secondly, Jesus gave the parable of The Old Wineskins. "No man also having drunk old wine straightway desireth new: for he saith, *the old is better*" (Lk. 5:39). A traditionalist is satisfied with the old ways, even when God is saying, "I am moving on to something new." "No thank you" he says, "I am very comfortable right here!"

In both parables, the Lord Jesus was comparing the old with the new. The old cannot bear the new, and the new cannot bear the old. Like the old garment, the old covenant could not possibly be patched with part of the new. Old bottles (wineskins) which lose their elasticity are unable to have new wine poured into them. The Israelites were like these hard and brittle wineskins. They found the new wine of the new covenant intolerable. They preferred the taste of the old wine. Even those Jews who did receive the new covenant attempted to live under *both* covenants simultaneously. Paul implies in Romans 7:1-4 that this is spiritual adultery, for they were trying to be married to the old covenant and new covenant at the same time.

In Romans 7:1-4, Paul taught that the old covenant is dead and that we are dead to the old covenant. We are now married to the new covenant of Christ. Paul used a natural illustration to explain this. He explained that a married woman is bound to her husband as long as he lives, but if he has died she is free to marry another man. To be married to another man while her first husband is living makes her an adulteress. But if her first husband is dead, she is free to be married to another man. The Jews who accepted Christ should have died to the old covenant and all of its traditions, and lived solely for Christ and the new covenant. In trying to be married to both covenants at the same time, they became spiritual adulterers.

The Judaizers, whom we have mentioned often in Galatians, were hard-line traditionalists. They believed in Christ but did not want to make a break with the past religion. Not only did they refuse to break from the past traditions, they imposed these traditions upon the Gentile believers as well, saying ...“Except ye be circumcised after the manner of Moses, ye cannot be saved” (Ac.15:1, 5).

What prompted the Judaizers to make such demands? It was a sense of jealousy! The Jews were nationalistic. They felt they were more favored of God than the Gentiles. In fact, they looked down upon all others. Thus, when the Gospel of Christ accepted the Gentiles as well as the Jews, their “superiority” was challenged. Moreover, these self-proclaimed teachers had the audacity to praise themselves and furnish testimonials “commending themselves” (2 Cor.10:12,18). Like so many ministers today, they were building their own kingdom and promoting their own cause (Phil.1:15).

The Judaizers never permitted God to cleanse their motives. They worshipped their traditions more than Jesus Christ, and they sought at any cost to defame Paul's credibility and testimony. Venomous slander is not the fruit of the Spirit. Certainly no one can stand before God on the Day of Judgment in this wretched condition. Let's get all of these things out of our hearts right now!

Summary of the Characteristics of the Judaizers:

- Jealousy was the driving force behind them
  - Being nationalistic and clannish, they thought—“We are the people, the favored of God”
  - They defended their traditions, even if it meant slandering Paul and using all manner of deceit
  - Tradition was worshipped more than the Lord Jesus Christ (cf. Mk. 7:9).
  - Despising the life of faith, they boasted in what they could see, touch, and perform
  - The Judaizers would not flow with the new emphasis of the Holy Spirit, but instead resisted it
  - They became false brethren, appearing to be righteous as they quoted Scripture and preached Jesus
  - They were hypocritical, jealous, slanderous, venomous, and, in fact, *enemies* of the Gospel
- All of these evils can infect a person if he does not keep in step with God and with what He is saying and doing.

### **God Always Has More to Say—Do Not Limit God**

In every area of life there is room for expansion. Virtually every invented thing can be improved. In every field, whether it be the medical world, the world of electronics, or the auto industry, there are new ideas, new methods, and new procedures that improve everything we have known in the past. This is true in the realm of spiritual matters. Anything we know about God can be enriched. Any truth, message, or presentation of the Gospel can be stated with greater clarity and diction. Whatever we have or know, God can show us a better way. We are changed from one degree of glory to another. Let us not limit God as the Laodiceans, who felt they had it all (Rev. 3:17,18).

### **If We Do Not Go On With God—We Are Sinning!**

One woman from the Amish / Mennonite community said, “Why do I need anything new? I am walking in the steps of my parents and grandparents who were excellent Christians.” In one sense, I could not have agreed with her more, but there was something very important that she was not understanding. When God gives more light, we are responsible to walk in that light, and God is requiring more of us today because He has given us more truth. Therefore, what was good enough for our forefathers is not good enough for us. Sin is most easily summarized in Romans 3:23— “to come short of the glory of God.” Therefore, if we are not keeping in step with God when He is marching on, we are sinning. God had changed directions when He introduced a new covenant to Israel, but they said, “We would rather continue with the old.”

## The Call to Perfection

One of the clearest theme's of Paul's 14 epistles is the theme of *perfection*. The old covenant had no power to bring a believer into perfection. The blood of animals could not cleanse a guilty conscience or break the power of sin. None of the old testament sacrifices or ordinances could change the heart, but the new covenant of Christ can. Consider some of the problems of the human heart:

PREJUDICE	LUSTFUL	UNRELIABILITY
HYPOCRISY	INDEPENDENT	CHANGEABLENESS
STUBBORNNESS	CLASS-CONSCIOUSNESS	INSTABILITY
HATEFULNESS	REVILER / MOCKER	IMPULSIVE
WORLDLINESS	FANATICISM	DISRESPECTFUL
IMAGINATIONS	IMMODERATION	PARTIAL
CRITICISM	COMPROMISE	OVER-TALKATIVE
LONELINESS	DISLOYALTY	INSOMNIA
SUPERSTITIONS	INCONSISTENCY	DEBTS
OVERSENSITIVENESS	UNFAITHFULNESS	UNBELIEF
PERFECTIONISM	FLATTERY	GREED
EXTRAVAGANCE	PHOBIAS	DOMINEERING
DESPONDENCY	ENVY / JEALOUSY	DEMANDING
ARROGANCE	ANXIETY	FILTHINESS / SLUM
RECLUSIVENESS	ALARMISM	LAZINESS
INFERIORITIES	GUILT	BRAGGING
LEGALISM	SELF-RIGHTEOUSNESS	DREAMWORLDS
CYNICISM	PRIDE	FRIGIDNESS
COMPLEXES	CONFUSION	INFATUATION
SARCASM	DOGMATISM	UNREASONABLE
UNTHANKFULNESS	SELF-REJECTION	DOUBT
COMPLAINING	INDIFFERENCE	DEFIANT
INTROVERSION	DECEIT / LYING	REBELLIOUS
EMBARRASSMENT	OVERSERIOUSNESS	HARDNESS
DISCORD-SOWING	SELF-CONSCIOUSNESS	ABRASIVE
SKEPTICISM	RATIONALIZATIONS	DRUNKENNESS
SELF-WILL	ARGUMENTATIVE	ANOREXIC
NEGATIVISM	ANGER / WRATH	CHANCE-TAKING
EXCUSE-MAKING	SELF-PITY	CURSING
EVASIVENESS	MOODINESS	DEBATING
INDECISIVENESS	BITTERNESS	FAULTFINDING
DISCOURAGEMENT	DISHONESTY	DEVIOS / SHIFTY
PROCRASTINATION	GRUDGEFULNESS	DISCONTENT
CLANDESTINE	UNFORGIVENESS	SELFISHNESS

All of the above are spiritual problems, and the list is far from complete. These are problems in the soul, spirit, and mind of man. Abstaining from pork or rigid observance of the sabbath day will never break any of these bondages. Having a strict dress code cannot change the heart or help an evil nature. It is a walk of faith and being joined to the Perfect One, that brings us to perfection.

## The Problem of a Hard Heart—Man's Greatest Malady

Only by a Walk of Faith and Obedience Can a Stony Heart Be Conquered

Hardness of Heart is:

- A warning for all *believers* —“Harden not your hearts.” (cf. Hebrews 3:8, 3:15, 4:7, Psalm 95:8)
- Something even the twelve apostles struggled with (Mark 6:52, 8:17, 16:14).
- The reason for divorce (Matt.19:8, Mark 10:5). A hardened heart shuts people out of our lives.
- The cause of unbelief (Mark 3:5). Jesus was angry and grieved by their *hard hearts*.
- The result of pride (Dan. 5:20). Pride caused Nebuchadnezzar to harden himself (Rom.12:3,12:16).
- A proud heart. A hard heart is a proud, obstinate heart with plenty of fight in reserve (Ex. 8:15).
- The reason people are unable to turn back to God, and the reason for rebellion (2 Chron. 36:13).
- The reason people will not listen (Neh. 9:16-17, 29). See also Jeremiah 7:26, 19:15, Ex. 33:3).
- The reason people will not hear the law or hear instruction that would save them (Zech. 7:11,12).
- The reason certain ones spoke evil of Paul's preaching and turned others away (Acts 19:9).
- A result of sin and its lures. Do not be “hardened through the deceitfulness of sin” (Heb. 3:13).
- Wickedness (Prov. 21:29, Deut. 15:7-10). “A wicked man hardens his face.”
- The thing that causes a man to fall into trouble and calamity (Prov. 28:14).
- The reason some people are cut off suddenly (Prov. 29:1), after ignoring warning after warning.
- The reason people refuse correction, and refuse to repent (Jer. 2:30, 5:3).
- The reason people speak hard words (Psalm 94:4, Jude 1:15, Psa. 75:5).
- The reason people accuse God of being “a hard man” (Mt. 25:24), but its hypocritical (Rom. 2:1).
- The reason an offended brother is so hard to be won (Prov.18:19). His heart is harder than iron.
- A wrong defense response when hurt. Job “hardened himself in sorrow” (Job 6:10, Gen. 27:41,42).
- A reason people can't prosper. “Who hath hardened himself against him and prospered” (Job 9:4)?
- A major reason people cannot believe (2 Kings 17:14).
- Insensitivity: The reason a mother goes against nature and forsakes her own offspring (Job 39:16).
- Israel's greatest problem, and ours (Ezek. 3:7, Deut. 9:6, 10:16, 31:27, Jud. 2:19).
- The reason people store up a huge amount of wrath they will receive on Judgment Day (Rom. 2:5).
- God's judgment: Sometimes God hardens people from having holy fear (wisdom). Isaiah 63:17.  
Joshua 11:20 -“ It was of the Lord to harden their hearts ...” because they were so wicked.  
Deuteronomy 2:30 - “God made his heart obstinate ... to destroy him.” When people continue to harden their hearts, eventually God Himself will harden them, and destroy them.  
Exodus 4:1 - 14:17 - Pharaoh hardened his heart 10 times, so God hardened him another 10 times.  
Pharaoh hardened his own heart - Ex. 7:13, 7:14, 7:22, 8:15, 8:19, 8:32, 9:7, 9:34, 9:35, 13:15  
So God hardened Pharaoh - Ex. 4:21, 7:3, 9:12, 10:1, 10:20, 10:27, 11:10, 14:4, 14:8, 14:17

There is not a single instance in the whole Bible where a hardened heart ever brought God's blessing. Instead, it always brought judgment.

Jeremiah 31:31-33, Ezekiel 11:19-20, 36:26 - The whole purpose of the new covenant is to take away our hard and stony hearts to give us a heart of flesh. This takes *time* and many responses to God. It is only by a walk of faith, not a life of rituals, that these heart issues can be remedied.

## **The Need to Continue**

Although there are many Christians, only a few really accomplish God's will for their lives. Only a handful allow God to shape them into kings and priests. These are people like David, men after God's own heart, who have purposed to fulfill *all* of God's will (Ac.13:22). May we be like David.

### **Everyone Will Be Tested**

God brings every believer and every church to a time of decision. When God confronts us with issues, He will make perfectly clear what He is saying. According to the response of our hearts, we shall either receive or not receive new grace from God to go on. At a particular pastor's conference, a man of God saw in a vision an angel present with a book in his hand. As the angel was examining each pastor carefully, he was writing something in the book he held. He was recording the names of those pastors who would receive new grace from God to go on in their walk. Only some of the pastor's names were written in that book, and some were not. God is examining each and every one of us, whatever our spiritual level, to see what kind of a heart we have. It is not what we are, but what we are willing to allow God to make of us. This is what God looks for in the heart.

As individuals, God will test us. But also, He will put our church to the test. Many years ago, I attended a large church that had experienced seven years of revival. I served with several other pastors working in the Christian school, Bible school, and cell groups. This church was blessed in every way. It had organization and order, and the worship and teaching was very excellent. All of us seemed to be walking on the same road with the same vision, purpose, and destination. Then God created circumstances to show us what was really in our hearts. He put all of us to the test. Unfortunately, most of the people turned their backs on the truths they knew so well. Today, that same church is almost deserted. Many of the couples have split up and are not even serving the Lord. This story is all too familiar, and represents countless other churches around the world.

### **Be Prepared For the Evil Day**

Ephesians 6:13 warns us to gird ourselves with all of God's armor in order to stand when "the evil day" comes. That "evil day" is a special day of test. There was a man named Job who experienced a notable day of testing. One day, Ruth and Orpah stood at a crossroads and had to make a decision either to go on with God or go back to their gods (Ruth 1). Orpah's commitment was shallow. She had never *abandoned* her life to God, though she loved Him. Therefore, when the day of temptation came, she had no moral strength to choose right. Thus, she returned to her gods, to her old life-style. This is why Galatians is so important, as well as all the other books of Scripture. There is coming a day of test, and when that test comes we will either go on or we might go back.

Sad to say, I have had fellow-ministers and close friends who have "gone back" when their test came. My wife and I were very close to a particular couple whose names I will not mention here. We ministered together in other countries, and enjoyed excellent fellowship for many years. Today, both are grievously backslidden, divorced, and neither of them want anything to do with us, or the church. We are total strangers. The man never allowed God to cleanse his heart of lust and he fell into a trap with pornography on the internet. He was in contact with women all around the world. Intoxicated with lust, he could not let go of his life-style and adultery. The wife, crushed by his unrepentant spirit, and having all the same propensities and weaknesses in her own life, also fell into adultery and soon divorced him. For nearly twenty years, God had been warning both of them about this issue, but they had not given sufficient heed.

## **Insensitivity to the Holy Spirit**

When God's Spirit speaks to us or is prompting us to take some course of action, we must be quick to respond to Him. By continually ignoring God's pleadings, a terrible thing happens to our heart. Spiritual dullness sets in and we lose our sensitivity to the Holy Spirit. The conscience becomes deadened. A "seared conscience" does not happen over night, but gradually. It is dangerous to slide into this condition, for in this state we are no longer able to know when we are offending God or grieving His Spirit. (See Prov. 30:20, I Tim. 4:2).

### **Not Listening Today Affects Our Tomorrows**

The person we are today is the result of what we have done yesterday. What a man does today affects his tomorrows. This is why it is so serious when we do not pay attention to what God is saying to us *today*. For if we are not listening to God today, in what condition will we find ourselves five years from now, or ten years? I will try to illustrate this point by making reference to my graduating class. I was one of eighty new students entering a theological school. Some of the faculty members said it was the best group of freshmen they had ever seen. The student body was loaded with talented young men and women. Some of them had already attended notable universities and were straight A students. Several were accomplished musicians, and others were gifted evangelists. That same year, God visited the Institute with an extraordinary revival. This divine visitation continued the three years I attended there. Often I reflect back to those three special years, but I have also wondered about something else: —What if God had pulled back the curtain and showed each student what they would be like 20 or 30 years later. Many, I am sure, would have screamed in horror.

- One started a cult, drawing men to himself instead of pointing them to God.
- One divided a whole organization and attempted to overthrow the president.
- One burned his house to collect fire insurance and sat in prison.
- Others died of aids, or died before their time.
- Some have left the ministry to which they were called.
- Some are divorced.
- Some are not living for God at all.
- And some are doing very well.

### **Equal Opportunity — But Only Some Make Use of it**

During my years at Bible school, everyone of us had the same opportunities. It was a time of revival. It was the time for all of us to have our hearts changed. This was true in Moses' time. *All* those who came out of Egypt passed through the Red Sea, and *all* were under the cloud of glory. *All* ate the same spiritual meat, and *all* drank the same spiritual drink (1 Cor.10:1-4). They *all* had the same experiences and the same opportunities, but with many, God was not pleased (1 Cor.10:5). These truths are carefully written in God's Word for our learning, and our warning (1 Cor.10:6,11).

Many people turn a deaf ear to what God is saying to them. But in what condition will we find ourselves ten or fifteen years from now? Are we responding to God *today*? We must listen to Him *today*, for if we keep putting it off until tomorrow, our hearts will grow hard and we will end up in obscurity. "Today, if you will hear his voice, Harden not your hearts" (Psa. 95:7-11, Heb. 3:7-11).

**"Walk while ye have the light, lest darkness come upon you;"**  
(John 12:35b)

## **The Importance of Staying on God's Path**

Many years ago a missionary left his fruitful ministry in Africa and returned to England. He looked at his four children who were young adults and wanted them to have a college education that Africa could not provide. Thus, he left Africa and returned to England to educate his children. But in doing so, he was leaving the will of God and the call of God.

While in England, he still had a fruitful ministry as a pastor, but he was out of God's will and he was very unhappy. Being out of harmony with God's plan, the whole family lost all of their joy. The husband and wife were rough in their words, actions, and attitudes toward each other.

Jesus warned: “*He who loves son or daughter more than me is not worthy of me*” (Mt.10:37), but this dear man had made idols of his children. He was putting them ahead of God and the will of God. Later, he was able to briefly visit Africa again, and while he was there, God graciously reinstated his ministry of miracles. Then he returned to England to be with his children. None of his children for whom he had left the mission field were living for God. In a moment of bitter anguish he lamented to them: “I have sacrificed my all for you but what have you done with your lives?”

Anything we idolize eventually becomes rotten to us. An idol is an object of excessive devotion. It is to love that object more than God. But God must be number one in our lives, and if anything else is, it is an idol. So many people cherish the idol of human affection—children, spouse, boyfriend, or girlfriend. Yet anything we love more than God always turns sour. Not only will we find no joy in that idol, we will actually detest it. Let us have no other idols or gods before HIM. This poor man had resisted the pleading of the Holy Spirit many times, and he chose his children above God. His end was very dismal.

Another family left the mission field and returned to Europe. In Europe they opened a Christian book store, and God prospered it. Yet, they were not in the will of God. We might say, “But God blessed their works, therefore, God was pleased!” But God was not pleased. God has joy only when we are doing His will, and that includes staying in the *place* he has chosen (Deut.12:13,14). Otherwise He does not accept or enjoy our sacrifice for His purposes are not being accomplished.

## **Eat Everything God Sets Before You**

In Galatians, we are seeing a notable flaw in man—that mankind only hears what he wants to hear. That was the problem of the Judaizers. It was also the problem of the Galatian believers. When we hear the Word of God preached, do we imbibe only the things we like, and leave the rest on the plate? The Word of God is indeed meat and drink, and if we are going to be healthy, we have to assimilate *everything* God gives us, not only the things we like. There are some things that don't suit our taste but if we do not eat them, we are going to be sick. This is true in the natural, and it is even more true in the spiritual.

Israel did not like the new message of the new covenant. They said, “the old is better”. Many believers hear only that part of God's message that they want to hear, and the rest they ignore. So many want to serve God, but they want to serve Him in their own way and on their own terms. This is the reason so many ministers, missionaries and Bible school students go off course. Let us ask God for grace to partake of every “cup” He sets before us. Jesus did!

## There Are Conditions to be Met

To maintain the blessings and favor of God, we must continue to obey Him. All of God's promises are *conditional* (Deut. 28:1,2,15). Here are a few examples:

### THE PROMISES ARE FOR THOSE WHO OVERCOME

“He that overcometh shall inherit all things” (Revelation 21:7).

### THE PROMISES ARE FOR THOSE WHO WAIT FOR HIM

“Men have not heard, nor perceived by the ear, neither hath the eye seen, O God, beside thee, what he has prepared for him that waiteth him” (Isaiah 64:4).

### THE PROMISES ARE FOR THOSE WHO DO THE WILL OF GOD

“For ye have need of patience, that, after ye have done the will of God ye might receive the promise” (Hebrews 10:36).

### THE PROMISES ARE FOR THOSE WHO CONTINUE

- Only those who “*continue in his word*” become disciples, and come to know the whole truth, and full freedom. (John 8:31-32, 1 John 2:19)
- We become holy, unblameable, and unproveable “*if we continue in the faith, grounded and settled, and not moved away from the hope of the gospel*” (Colossians 1:22-23).
- We must “*continue in his goodness, otherwise we will be cut off*” even as Israel was for their unbelief. (Romans 11:22).
- Only by taking heed to ourselves and to the doctrine and “*continuing in them*” shall we save ourselves and those who hear us. (1 Timothy 4:16).
- The apostles “*continued with Christ in his temptations*”, not as many others who forsook him (Jn. 6:66). They were rewarded with a kingdom and each one received a throne (Luke 22:28-30).
- Paul and Barnabas exhorted believers to “*continue in the faith*” and that “*we must through much tribulation enter into the kingdom of God*” (Acts 14:22).
- Jesus exhorts us to “*continue in his love*”. We continue in his love by keeping his commandments. By obeying. (John 15:9-10, 14:15, 15:14) Obedience is proof that we love him. Disobedience proves we do not. We can lose His love and favor. Therefore, let us not turn back.

### ETERNAL LIFE IS PROMISED ONLY TO THOSE WHO ENDURE TO THE END

“Many shall be offended, and shall betray one another, and shall hate one another.” “The love of many shall wax cold”. This is a reference to believers who do not prepare themselves for the evil day of test. “But he that shall endure unto the end, the same shall be saved” (See Matthew 24:10-13, 10:22). The teaching that “we will make it anyway, no matter what we do” is simply unscriptural.

## We Must *Love* the Truth

Truth is more than facts and information. Jesus Christ declared, "I am the Truth." Therefore, truth is a Person. His life must be experienced. Truth involves the "fellowship of his sufferings." It is purchased at a high cost (Prov. 23:23). Are you willing to be wedded to the Truth? Would you be willing to be espoused to Christ and every part of His Word through experience? Knowing truth is not the same as partaking of it or possessing or owning it. Unless we pay for the truths we know and have them engraved deeply in our hearts, we will lose them. And unless we *love* the truth, we will be deceived (2 Thes. 2:10-12).

In my thirty-six years as a student and teacher of spiritual things, I have observed that *ignorance* of the Word of God is not the main problem among God's people. The greatest problem of all is the lack of *love* for the Word of God. According to 2 Thessalonians 2:10-12, people are deceived by the antichrist, not because of the lack of truth, but because they did not have a *love* for the truth. Instead, they are "lovers of pleasures more than lovers of God", and "lovers of their own selves" (2 Tim. 3:1,4; Phil. 2:20-21).

Judas was not just a believer and not just a minister, he was an apostle. And he was not just an apostle, he was one of the Twelve. Judas heard the truth, he preached the truth, and he walked with the Truth, the Lord Jesus Christ Himself. But he did not *love* the truth. He never allowed the truths he heard and preached to penetrate his own heart. Judas was close to the truth, but he would not embrace it or allow it to change him. This major apostle is not in heaven. He serves as an awesome warning to us that a person can believe in Jesus, walk with Jesus, and speak of Jesus, and end up going against Him.

Why did the Galatians throw away the truths they knew so well? How did smooth-talking, deceitful men rob them so easily of their spiritual inheritance? (Remember, there are many seducers "lying in wait to deceive") (Eph. 4:14). Many of the Galatians did not *love* the truth. They did not have a deep appreciation for the Light. This is the reason Judas fell. We are told in Psalm 109:17 that Judas "delighted not in blessing." Judas took lightly the sacred things. He did not appreciate the truths he knew. Judas had truth but did not receive *the love of* the truth.

Let us conclude Galatians by saying:

- Love the truth
- Buy the truth
- Pay attention to *all* the truth
- Experience the truth
- Get established in the truth
- Jesus is the Truth
- We are in a battle for the truth
- There are deceivers who want to steal the truth
- We will be tested to see if the truth is deep in our hearts

*Every New Testament Church was tested. In our times, the greatest test of all is coming. The Antichrist will appear, the arch-deceiver. Let us prepare ourselves for the evil day. Let us pray that we will be kept "from the hour of temptation, which shall come upon all the world, to try them that dwell upon the earth" (Revelation 3:10).*